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# WISCONSIN ACADEMY REVIEW

1986

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**On the cover: "Centre and Circumference." Nancy Burkert executed this brush and watercolor of a peony for an illustration of Emily Dickinson's poems, Acts of Light, published in 1980 by the New York Graphics Society.**

# WISCONSIN ACADEMY REVIEW

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## Annual Literary Issue

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# Editorial

Art cannot be understood apart from its cultural traditions: a punk rock song or an Indian raga, a play by Samuel Beckett or a verse fragment on a sherd, a Jackson Pollock or a carving on stone all require a cultural context and some history of the art form to make them comprehensible. A century ago people spoke of the inevitability of progress and the perfectability of civilization, but we no longer believe that civilization necessarily advances or that modern art is necessarily better than ancient art.

What started me thinking about this is the PBS series "In Search of Troy," which prompted me to go back and read more by and about Homer—the first and greatest of European poets, as H.D.F. Kitto and many others characterize the "blind" bard. Homer's Iliad (written down in the eighth century B.C.) has not only influenced all of Western art, it is still a best seller and the stories of Achilles and Agamemnon and Paris and Helen still have the power to move writers and readers.

The most intriguing modern book I read this summer is a first novel by Vikram Seth, *The Golden Gate*, about Yuppies' lives and loves in the Bay Area. What sets this apart from other contemporary novels is that the 307 pages of text, acknowledgments, dedication, and author's note are in sonnet form: *a b a b c c d d e f f e g g*. That Seth, born in India, educated at Oxford and Stanford, was able to convince Random House that the unknown-in-English verse novel is a viable form in the marketplace is remarkable. That the verse novel has been highly publicized by Random House and has received glowing reviews is improbable. But the book is a is sheer delight to read and wonderful to read aloud. Trendy activities by those most trendy of Californians described in that most conservative verse form: Seth's cleverness made me giggle and chortle and guffaw.

I might have anticipated this verse novel had I heeded Ron Wallace, poet, director of creative writing at UW-Madison, and now member of the *Review* editorial board, who pointed out the return to verse traditions in an interview published in the June 1983 *Review*: "Traditional rhyme and meter aren't dead . . . Almost every recent volume of contemporary poetry has some formal verse: sonnets, sestinas, rhymed couplets, terza rima."

A more conventional (i.e. twentieth-century English conventions) novel I read and enjoyed this summer was Lawrence University professor Mark Dintenfass's latest chronicle of the Jewish experience in America, *A Loving Place*, recounting retirement to Florida from Brooklyn. Other Wisconsin books I've found appealing are Marquette University professor Milton J. Bates's *Wallace Stevens: A Mythology of Self*, a very readable reconstruction of the poet's life from his work, *Milwaukee Journal* reporter Jacquelyn Mitchard's *Mother Less Child*, her personal account of an ectopic pregnancy which resulted in sterility and emotional crisis, and Madison Art Center director Tom Garver's beautifully illustrated book on the contemporary painter *George Tooker*. And, of course, I took pleasure in the stories and poems published in this issue, as well as many submitted but not published.

Patricia Powell

—Patricia Powell

# Authors

**J. M. Bartley** grew up in Colorado. He has traveled extensively, has degrees in music and education, performed professionally as a clarinetist and conductor, and taught for many years in Wisconsin schools. After turning to writing while recovering from an extended illness, he contributed articles to *Madison, Wisconsin*, and *Backpacker* magazines, is working on his first novel, and has an attachment to his word processor that goes beyond the bounds of reason. "The Great Blues" is his first published fiction.

**Margaret Savides Benbow** won the George B. Hill award in poetry four times while a student at UW-Madison. Since then her poems have been printed in anthologies and in literary magazines, including *Poetry, The Antioch Review*, and *The Kenyon Review*. Two chapbooks of poems have been printed, and she is looking for a publisher for a full-length manuscript, Bride and Bear.

**John Bennett** is Pennings Distinguished Professor of English and poet-in-residence at St. Norbert College, DePere. His most recent book of poetry is *The Holy Unicorn: A Book of Meditations*. He writes that he is currently working on long narrative poems which are ghost stories.

After raising a family, **Helen Block** embarked upon a mid-life career that included acquiring a bachelor's from the Westmar College and a master's in education from the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire and fourteen years of teaching secondary English in Iowa and Washington. She recently retired from the staff of Barron High School.

**Robin S. Chapman** teaches at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, where she studies child language development and disorders. Her poems have appeared recently in *The Christian Science Monitor, The Mother Earth News, The Poetry Review*, and (forthcoming) *Yankee* and *New Letters*.

**Mary Dalles** received her B.A. from UW-Platteville, her M.A. from UW-Madison, and began the doctoral program in English in fall 1985. She has been an instructor of English at UW-Platteville since 1979. She has published poetry in *Sweetwater Review, Bloodroot, North American Mentor Magazine*, and *Drumbeats*. Her volume of poetry, *Silken Desire*, was published in 1981.

**C X Dillhunt** was born in Green Bay; he lives in Madison with his wife and ten-year-old son. Mr. Dillhunt has an advanced certificate in educational administration from the graduate school at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. At Urbana he was poetry editor for the campus literary magazine. He also has a master's degree in children's literature from the University of Wisconsin-Madison where he did his undergraduate work in English, drama, and education. He has published in little magazines throughout the Midwest, New York, and Florida. He works as a systems analyst in administrative computing at UW-Madison.

**Credo James Enriquez** worked in Tokyo for three years. He is currently working on a poetry collection. His latest play, "Interview with General Truth," was performed at the Madison Civic Center in May, 1986.

**Michael Finger** attended Oconto High School and UW-Madison. He has had solo and group shows in the Sunprint Gallery in Madison and exhibited in the 1982 "Wisconsin Photography '83" at the Wustum Museum in Racine. Michael moved to Santa Barbara, California, in 1985.

**Al Gabor** was born in Milwaukee and received his B.A. in English from UW-Madison and his M.A. in creative writing from the State University of New York-Stonybrook. "The Downstairs Neighbors" is part of his creative writing thesis. Gabor has published in *Traces* and *The Milwaukee Journal*. He currently lives in Chicago.

**Ronald Harshman** coordinates credit outreach programs for the Center for Continuing Education and teaches in the extended degree program at UW-Superior. He received his B.S. and M.S. degrees from Indiana State University and his doctor of education degree from the University of Illinois. He has written articles on environmental and value education and political participation activities for high school students.

**Robert Hillebrand** teaches at Waukesha County Technical Institute and wrote the text, *Tip of the Iceberg*, for the basic composition course there. He lives in Oconomowoc and has published two novels and poetry, fiction, and nonfiction.

**Karlton Kelm** was born in Portage (1908), home of Zona Gale and Margery Latimer, who inspired and encouraged him to write. Karlton had his first short story accepted in Paris by *The Quarter*, a well known avant-garde magazine, on his graduation day from college. He also published in *The American Mercury* under H. L. Mencken and other literary journals of those depression years. He and his brother William edited their own magazine, *The Dubuque Dial*, and published such writers as James T. Farrell, Kay Boyle, William Saroyan, and Meridel Le Sueur. They kept in touch with Zona Gale and Margery Latimer in Portage. After Margery's tragic death they became friends also with her husband Jean Toomer and Margery's friend Meridel Le Sueur. Karlton published

two novels in 1936, *The Cherry Bed* and *Brother* with Bobbs-Merrill, but did not return to writing until 1982 after his retirement. He has recently published in magazines including *North American Review, The Literary Review, Ascent, South Dakota Review, Great Lakes Review, Mendocino Review.* He has begun his third novel.

**Herbert Kubly** published his first book in 1955, *American in Italy*, which won the National Book Award for nonfiction. He published his eleventh book in 1981, *Native's Return*, a study of Switzerland by a Swiss descendant with strong ties to his family's canton. In between he had four plays produced, numerous articles and short stories published, and books of fiction and nonfiction. Kubly taught creative writing and was writer-in-residence at UW-Parkside from 1969 to 1984. This year he brought out an anthology with a short novella of his own and twelve of his student's stories from those years, *The Parkside Stories*, which is reviewed in this issue. Home now in New Glarus on his family farm, Kubly is writing another novel. His story, "Fear of Blindness" is excerpted from this novel-in-progress.

**Jeffery Lewis** lives in Minong, Wisconsin, with his wife, Lydia, also a writer, and two children, Mariah and Jonah. He is a full-time writer; he also illustrates his work and makes sculptures in the summer. He has been published in magazines such as *Milkweed Chronicle, San Jose Studies, Loonfeather, Kansas Quarterly.* He has won the Lake Superior Regional Writers series three times. He has lived in Minong for eight years and has come to love the winters more each year.

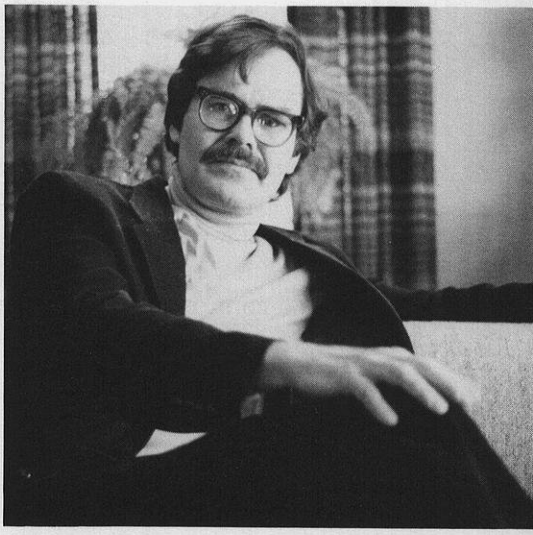
**Arthur Madson** has lived in Wisconsin for twenty-five years, has been writing poetry the last five of those years, is a frequent contributor to *Windfalls*, had a poem in the June 1984 *Wisconsin Academy Review* and has published in other journals.

**Emily Meier's** short stories have appeared in literary magazines including *The Three penny Review* in Berkeley and *Passages North* where she won the fiction prize in a nationwide competition funded by the National Endowment for the Arts. Her novella, *A Marriage in the Life of Faith Davenport*, was showcased in the 1984–85 issue of Sands.

**Herbert Kubly (right) is presented the 1956 National Book Award for nonfiction by Senator John F. Kennedy. W.H. Auden (left) received the award for poetry and John O'Hara (second from left) for fiction. Associated Press photo.**

**Lawrence Rungren** is a former Wisconsin resident now living in Watertown, Massachusetts. His poetry has appeared in magazines including *Abraxas, The Spoon River Quarterly, Poet Lore,* and *Modern Haiku* and was included in the *Poetry Out of Wisconsin V* anthology.

**Robert Siegel**



**Robert Siegel** is professor of English at UW-Milwaukee. His two books of poetry are *The Beasts & The Elders* and *In A Pig's Eye.* Honors for his work include awards from *Poetry*, the Council for Wisconsin Writers, and the National Endowment for the Arts. He is the author of several fantasy novels, including *Alpha Centauri* in 1980 and *Whalesong* in 1981. He lives with his wife, Ann, and three daughters in Whitefish Bay.

**David W. Ullrich** has taught in the Department of English at Ripon College and at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. His poetry has appeared in several journals, and he has been on the poetry editorial staff of *The Madison Review.* His scholarly writings include an article on Samuel Taylor Coleridge in *The Wordsworth Circle.* He is completing his dissertation on the Romantic poets.

# *Fear of Blindness*

**By Herbert Kubly**

Opening his eyes in the first glow of a June morning, Nicodemus Kyle III peered into a swirling crater of veering flames.

"Nora," he murmured, reaching across the bed for her. His hands rustled emptily on the pillow, and he realized his wife was not there. "Nora," he repeated, turning her name into a cry of pain.

It occurred to him that the blazing inferno was a hallucination in which, like Mozart's Don, he was being immolated for his sins.

He smiled at this droll idea and then, in a reflex of fear, he covered his right eye with his hand and the fires vanished.

Turning his left eye to the bedside window, he recognized familiar images emerging from the mists, a slope of old oaks above a dark pond and beyond it a row of young willows. Lowering his hand from his right eye, he confronted new dark phantoms of tadpoles darting through a magenta tide.

"Oh, dear Christ!" Simultaneously cursing and praying, Nic Kyle sank back into the chilling desolation of his bed.

He was a forty-eight-year-old farmer who was sometimes a writer, but most of all he was a reader; and the single haunting fear of his life was the fear of blindness.

The morning light fell obliquely across his bed. Turning his functioning eye to a wall of books, Nic identified groupings of titles by and about Dostoevski and Chekhov, Herodotus and Homer, Faulkner and Kazantzakis, and Lawrence and Joyce, who, Nic remembered, was partially blind. For his secondhand copy of the first American edition of Ulysses he had traded his collection of Zane Grey westerns. The year was 1948, Nic was fourteen, and his mother insisted that he hide the book when the minister called.

Nic raised his watch to his seeing eye. The time was just after five o'clock, too early to phone Nora. He lay back to consider his situation. It had not come upon him without warning. Less than three weeks ago, when he was in New York to see his editor, the ophthalmologist who had cared for his eyes for twenty years congratulated him for his diminishing near-sightedness. His sight, said the doctor, had never been so clear.

Then, even before he left New York, Nic became aware of a flaw in his vision. In the beginning it had seemed to him a smudging of the right lens of his glasses which he persisted in trying to wipe away. When that failed, he was beset by a notion that an eyelash had become imbedded under the lid, and he tried to rub it out.

At home he dreamed one night that he was blind and was awakened by Nora who heard his cries.

"Niko, darling! What is it?"

"I am blind," he moaned.

"Blind!"

He continued to believe he could not see until she reached over him to light the lamp.

"I can see!"

"Of course you can, darling." She drew him to her, and he lay on her breast, feeling there the comforting strength of her pulse. His soul, which seemed for a moment to have fled, returned. "You had a dream," she said.

And suddenly a great relief swept over him. For a moment he had believed that, had the blindness been real, she would have made even that endurable, and he welcomed the dream as a blessing, a revelation of her love.

"I shall never stop looking at you again," he said, kissing her.

"I hope you'll never want to." She smiled. "What were you dreaming?"

"I was reading to Sylvan Dill, a not-too-bright kid in my sixth grade class. I think he died in Korea. Want to hear the whole story?"

"Oh, yes! Please." Nora loved stories from his life.

He fell back on the bed and lay in her cradling arm. "Well, Sylvan Dill was not a good reader, so I helped him with his assignments . . ."

"Were you friends?"

"You might say so. The reason we were friends was his father's gas station which sold condoms—which we called 'prick caps'—and comic books about Blondie and Dagwood, Jiggs and Maggie, and Barney Google supplied by the condom salesmen. My favorite was Tillie the Toiler whose boss socked it to her right on the desk."

Nora was laughing. "Well," Nic continued, "one of the salesmen left a book, which he said was a real hot number. Being no reader, Sylvan's father forgot about it, and Sylvan offered it to me on condition that I report its contents to him. He could never remember the title, *Lady Chatterly's Lover*, so we called it Lady Charley."

"You read *Lady Chatterly's Lover* in the sixth grade?" Nora skirled.

"Grandfather Ueli was staying with us, and one night when we were home alone, he found me reading in

bed and warned that if I continued to wear out my eyes like that I would go blind. He took the book, and when he recovered from the shock he said God would punish me.

"With God involved in the matter I guessed I was in double jeopardy. But in the morning my father returned the book to me. If he is old enough to understand a book, my father said, the boy must be allowed to read it.

"My mother disagreed. Still, I kept reading. I developed a muscular imbalance and was beginning to appear cross-eyed, so I was taken to an oculist who dilated my eyes. When my eyesight was blurred for over two hours, I decided I was going blind. God was finally pitching it to me for reading Lady Charley in bed."

As their laughter subsided, Nora turned to Nic and kissed him. He tasted her tears and wondered whether they were from laughter or weeping.

"Both," she said. "It's so funny and sad. You really believed that God would punish you for reading Lawrence?"

"I was sure of it. I began to dream I was blind, and one night, waking up in the dark, I cried until my father came to turn on the light. He put a night light in the room which I kept on until I was fifteen."

"But why this dream now?" Nora asked, "Why tonight?"

"How should I know?" he replied evasively. "How does one explain dreams?"

He did not tell her about the tadpoles in his eyes, and three days later they vanished.

This time in the June dawn Nora was not there to turn on the light, and the blindness was no dream. He heard a phantom voice whispering, "It is not you but another who lies here, and this malevolent jest will pass." But he knew the voice was his fear speaking falsely. Confronting his desolation, he yearned for a footstep, a human sound.

But Nora, who was thirty, was at their apartment in town for the opening of the summer session at the university, where she was a sociology professor.

He closed the door and went into the bathroom where he taped a surgical pad over his right eye. *Hardly Hathaway*, he addressed the mirror image. *Or Moshe Dayan or Floyd Gibbons*, he thought. *Or James Joyce.*

He entered his study, a west-facing room still in shade, and switched on a light. An inside wall was covered with books; another was filled with shelves of records and tapes and a stereo with decks and speakers. His desk, a sawed-down old church dining table which ran the length of the room, faced a green landscape of grazing herds and forested hills. It was for this view that Nic's father, Ulrich, had chosen the site for his house.

Lying open on the desk was the current volume of Nic's journal. Begun when he was a student, the narratives and reflections had grown to twenty-four notebooks bearing a single title, The Obsolete Christian, a sobriquet jokingly assigned Nic by a pragmatic philosophy professor.

Lifting the page to his left eye, he read with difficulty some lines he had written the evening before.

"I live by my eyes; at least half of my sensory life is visual. Sound—human voices, music, the natural harmonies of the earth—comprise another twenty-five percent of my experience. In comparison the other senses—taste, smell, touch (except for making love)—seem of minimal importance."

Suspecting he might be leaving the room for a long time, Nic began to tidy it. He returned books to shelves, gathered up yesterday's *New York Times*, collected scattered discs of *The Magic Flute*. He stopped to place side three on the turntable and listened to the jubilant voices of three soprano pages singing their hymn to the rising sun.

Slowly he moved about the room with the music as if he were committing both to memory, pausing before a Pulcinella painted by Ercole Prendavi, an artist from Bologna with whom he had traveled in Sicily when young, a water color from Rome of the marble elephant supporting a cenotaph outside the church of Santa Maria sopra Minerva, a painting of a partridge family against a surrealist landscape purchased from the artist in the ruins of Agia Triada in Crete. There were two drawings of himself as a supple youth made by an artist in Dubrovnik as studies for a Last Judgment fresco. In one he was a winged angel levitating in Paradise; in the other his body was contorted by Stygian torments and his hands covered the eyes to protect them from flames.

He lingered before a water color of the singer Sofia Brunner in her greatest role, the Marschallin in *Der Rosenkavalier*. She painted it herself for a Valentine's gift and inscribed it "Pour Nicci, mon piu cher Quin-Quin," assigning to him the Marschallin's pet name for her boy lover, Octavian.

He studied for a moment some new photographs of himself in academic gown and mortar board. Two weeks ago the university had presented him its honorary doctorate of letters, described by the president as "the most extraordinary farmer in the upper Mississippi valley." The description had pleased Nic more than the literary commendations that followed it. In Upper Canaan farming was a respected profession, while literature was a mistrusted and suspiciously indolent pursuit. In some quarters it was even considered demonic because a writer, seeing so much, quite certainly possessed the evil eye.

Nic remembered how thirty years ago the villagers had laughed at his father, Ulrich, for continuing the education of his only son. "The kid's too dumb to be a farmer," a neighbor had said. "So they have to send him to a university."

Nic guessed no doctors would be available before eight. At seven he would call the home of his cousin Steve Balmar, an ophthalmologist at the university medical center. Nora would be getting up about the same time, and he would call her. The time would pass.

He returned to his bedroom and dressed in Levi's, T-shirt, and loafers and went downstairs and out on the veranda, where he stood testing his flawed vision. He could see the forested hills beyond and in the valley parallel rows of new green corn thrusting up through black loam fields. But these were familiar details impressed in his memory, and he wondered whether he would see them if he did not know they were there.

On the telephone he described to his cousin Steve the tadpoles darting inside his eye.

"That sounds serious," Steve replied gravely. "Can you meet me in the office in an hour?"

Nic phoned for a taxi to drive him into the city. Then, when he was certain Nora would be up, he called the apartment.

"Oh, no . . ." For a moment the phone was silent. "It must be a mild irritation," she said. "Something in the eye." He detected a tremor in her voice.

"Probably nothing at all," he said. "But Steve thinks he should see me."

"I'll come for you," Nora said.

"I've already arranged for a taxi."

"I'll hurry through class and meet you at Steve's." He waited for her to hang up. "Remember," she continued, "Steve has a reputation for pessimism. He prepares patients for the worst so they'll be relieved when it's not. Remember, I love you."

The worst was what Nic was imagining. Instant ophthalmia. Collapsed optic nerve. Most terrifying of all, a brain tumor, the early symptoms of which included ocular disturbances.

He packed a briefcase with pajamas and toiletries. He picked up a new translation of the Iliad which he was reading and then, instead of putting it in his case, returned it to the shelf.

Steve beamed an icy blue light into Nic's eyes.

"It's serious," he said. "The right retina is detached. The left shows a tear."

It was a relief to hear even the harsh words spoken, to be confronted with specific instead of unknown terrors.

There was a rustle in the outer office and Nora swept in. She kissed Nic's cheek. "I love you," she whispered. She noted Steve's grave expression and waited.

"Immediate surgery is imperative," Steve said.

"Nic's eyes . . . " Nora began softly and faltered. A note of authority entered into her voice. "It must be the best. Dallas, Rochester, New York . . . It doesn't matter."

"Every minute delayed is a peril," said Steve. "But in this matter Nic is in luck. One of the best retina men is here at the university."

Nic detected in Steve's words the ring of medical chauvinism, of loyalty to a colleague.

"Who is he?" Nora asked.

"Harper Burden," Steve replied. "Retina surgery demands a young man's nervous strength and digital precision. I gave it up when I was fifty. Dr. Burden was my student, and he is young. His success is phenomenal."

"How phenomenal?" Nora asked.

"Sight restoration in ninety-five percent of his patients."

It was arranged with a phone call. "Dr. Burden will see you in twenty minutes," Steve said. "His office is in the next building."

The two massive structures standing side-by-side in an area known as Medical Park were like the twin temples of Karnak. On a hill two blocks away stood the complex of Nicolet Polyclinic Hospital. "It has the best ophthalmology department in the state," Nora said.

"How do you know?"

"I asked Steve."

"Do you believe him about Dr. Burden?"

"Steve is your cousin and your friend. He feels a responsibility. Yes, I believe him."

So must I, Nic thought.

A nurse led Nic into a chilly, air-conditioned consulting room and Nora followed. They stood among heavily mounted optical instruments, waiting. In a gush of warm air a pale man with intense blue eyes and graying brown hair entered and silently nodded. His youthful face was cast in a frown, and Nic wondered if he were annoyed by Nora's presence. He motioned for Nic to be seated and with delicate hands guided his chin into a cold metal cup, strapped his head in a metal frame, and began flashing piercing blue and red lights into his right eye.

Peering through lensed instruments, the doctor nodded as if in secret affirmation to himself and, as if there were no ears except his own in the room, he addressed himself in softly spoken words and phrases.

"Choroid herniation . . ."

Showing the lights into Nic's left eye, he continued the subdued prattle.

"Macula prolapse . . . intraocular pressures . . ."

He made notes on a pad and the only sounds in the room were the strokes of his pen.

Without looking up he said, "My nurse will call the

hospital. Should she ask for a private room?"

"Yes," Nora replied.

"You may wish to lunch before you check in. Surgery will be at about eleven o'clock tomorrow."

"Dr. Burden . . ." Nora began. "Mr. Kyle is a farmer. He is also a writer."

The doctor nodded, indicating he'd been apprised of this.

"Perhaps we're overreacting," Nic began. He stopped, wondering what there was to say. Dear doctor, my heightened sensibilities and my fecund imagination conjure fearful forebodings and I make an elitist appeal for reassurance, for your very special effort.

Christ, no! This was too absurd! Did one fear blindness more for having written a book?

What he really wanted to say was *God damn it. You have looked into my eyes. Now won't you also look at me?*

He felt Nora's hand tighten on his. "Could you give us some details?" she asked. "About how it will be?"

Dr. Burden frowned; the question appeared to vex him. "I will operate on the right eye," he said brusquely. "Hospital recovery should take two weeks. The retina is badly lacerated, and your case may be more complicated than ordinary.

He stopped. It was as if he had been about to offer assurance and then withdrew it. Unable to let this pass, Nic asked, "When it's all over, will I be able to read?"

"I hope so."

"What of the left eye?" Nora asked.

"Fragmentation without detachment. We'll deal with it later, probably with laser."

"I'm going to lunch," he said to his nurse and, to Nic, "I'll see you this afternoon."

The nurse tied a black shield over Nic's right eye. Out in bright sunlight he could see everything clearly with one eye and nothing that had happened seemed real. They crossed to an Italian restaurant where Nic ordered a double martini and bolted it.

"I think I've antagonized Dr. Burden," he said.

"The nurse said he had two difficult operations this morning and two more are scheduled for this afternoon," Nora said.

Silently they ate ravioli and salad.

After two hours of tests, X rays, and interviews a nurse took them to a room on the hospital's ophthalmology floor. A maintenance man was removing a television from a ledge facing the bed.

"I guess you won't be needing this," the man said to Nic as he carried the television away.

The nurse handed Nic a green cotton hospital gown. "There are hangers for your things in the closet," she said. "I'll be back when you're ready."

The room was painted chartreuse. Nic noted the high bed with a collapsible guard rail, two Naugahyde lounge chairs, on one wall a bright water color of a sun-dappled forest, on another a pair of winged woodcocks rising from a field of blue chicory blooms. To the left of the bed a door into the bathroom; to the right a window looking out on a clump of silver-leaved birch growing in a walled garden of flaming nasturtiums.

"The nurse returned. "Haven't you changed yet?" she asked. She was a tall, handsome girl with gray-flecked eyes and a commanding voice. "My name's Linda," she said, handing Nic a glass of water and a small cup with two yellow pills.

"What are they?" Nora asked.

"Librium," Linda said. "He's supposed to be relaxing in bed."

Nic swallowed the pills. The nurse left, leaving Nic to undress and struggle into the gown.

He lay waiting on the bed, until Dr. Burden darted silently into the room. He nodded to Nic and then to Nora and, without speaking, removed the shield from Nic's eye and, flashing his lamp into it, he nodded to himself, affirming what he already appeared to know.

The resident ophthalmologist will drop in tonight," he said as he replaced the shield. "I ordered the librium to assure you a good night's rest. I'll see you in the morning." The doctor smiled wanly and left.

"I keep looking at his hands, trying to imagine those pale, slender fingers inside my eyes," said Nic.

"It's done with instruments," Nora said.

"Hands. No doubt Homer's blind harpist had hands like his.

> To his heart the blind minstrel sang . . .
> And Odysseus
> Let the molten tears run down his cheeks . . .

Adding his own line, Nic continued, "Let the harper's pale hands heal my afflicted eyes."

"Darling," Nora cried, breaking into tears. "Did anyone ever tell you you should be a writer?"

He drew her down and held her beside him. At that moment the door opened and two nurses' aids entered, one bearing two trays of food and the other a folding table.

"Dr. Sage thought your wife might like to eat with you tonight," she said.

"Dr. Sage," Nic repeated, turning it into a question.

"He's the resident," one girl replied.

The pair set up the table with chairs, arranged flatware and dishes of food, and left.

"Darling, dinner appears to be served," said Nora. Taking Nic's hand she led him from bed to table.

They had barely begun eating the scallopine, mashed potatoes, asparagus, and salad when one of the girls returned with a tray bearing a perspiring bottle of white wine, two glasses, and a corkscrew.

Nic picked up the bottle. "Vallee Fendant, one of my favorites!"

"I discovered wine's negotiable when not medically restricted, so I got the doctor's permission to order some. You're to have it whenever you wish."

"Bless you, darling!" He felt exhilarated by love. "Let's drink!" he exclaimed, turning the screw and drawing out the cork. Taking care not to spill, he poured.

"To my wife," he toasted. "To the exquisite loveliness of her heart."

"To my beloved husband," said Nora, raising her glass. "And," she added thoughtfully, "to Dr. Burden."

For several seconds glasses remained suspended in their elevated hands.

"To Dr. Burden," Nic gently repeated.

They drank. They drank until their glasses were empty.

He took up the bottle and moved it to Nora's glass and the wine gushed out over the table and into Nora's lap.

"Can't you see where you're pouring?" she cried.

"No," he said. "I can't."

He heard her cry of anguish and his own heart ached.

Later, after the food and wine, after he persuaded Nora to return to the apartment to rest and had himself drifted into a tenuous sleep, he heard from a distance a measured wooden clacking which grew steadily louder as though a slowly beaten tom-tom were approaching his room.

When it stopped, Nic opened his eye and saw, standing tall in the door, a wide-shouldered young man extraordinarily dressed in white trousers and jacket and, on bare feet, white wooden sabots. He was smiling.

The man approached Nic's bed and extended his hand. "I'm Rex Sage, the resident ophthalmologist," he said. "I'm sorry I couldn't be here to meet you this afternoon. How're you feeling?"

"Apprehensive," Nic replied.

"I don't wonder. You have reason. In your circumstances so would I." The doctor's voice was simultaneously deep and soothing. "But there's a difference between your subjective and my objective view of your situation, and I want you to know that in my opinion you're going to be all right."

"I'm soliciting all conceivable assurances," said Nic, wondering at the ease with which he was talking to this stranger. Some quality in him was perplexing, like the shadow of a dimly remembered encounter. The fellow had a youthfully robust physique, an open suntanned face, steady dark eyes, and brown hair in slight disarray.

"Trust my confidence," he said.

"I sure as hell need to."

"I've come to tell you that we have an early morning appointment," Dr. Sage said. "I'm taking you to the examining room to make some sketches."

"Wouldn't a photograph do?"

The doctor smiled. "No, as a matter of fact. My sketches are of the insides of your eyes, some maps for Dr. Burden. That's my good news. Now for the bad. What falls upon me is the unpleasant duty of covering your eyes. Both eyes."

He removed a plastic envelope from his pocket and drew from it what appeared to be a black domino. "Covering the eye is the only way to deal with the tracking problem. Any movement of your left eye also moves the right which must be absolutely still during the healing period. Dr. Burden wants you to wear the mask tonight to get accustomed to it."

"Like saddling the colt before riding it?" asked Nic.

"The idea exactly."

Nic closed his eyes and Dr. Sage placed the mask over them, securing it with surgical tape. "Feeling okay?" he asked.

From the question Nic sensed the doctor was perceiving his thoughts. Applying the mask completed his darkness. If it was not into hopeless blindness he was entering, it was nonetheless into the shadowed dominion of the blind.

"Okay."

"I'll see you in the morning then. Roll with it," the doctor said. "Just roll with it and, as the man on the bus says, leave the driving to us."

Listening to the wooden clacking down the long halls, he felt curiously calm as if he were being buoyed on a drifting sea toward an uncharted adventure. In his drowsiness he strained to hear the diminishing footsteps which, growing softer, seemed to turn into the tappings of a cane.

*In the city of dark streets nothing was visible. The hesitant cane rapping through the crowded ghetto belonged to his blind friend Enzo Moretti. Using it like a mandible, Enzo guided Nic to an unlit room into which they were welcomed with ribald laughter. In an inexplicable perception Nic sensed that the shadowed space was filled with a fiendish company of hunchbacks and dwarfs, jittering palsied women and hairless children, boys with tails and girls with fins, and every other imaginable blunder of nature. The fur-faced padrone came to greet them and guide them to a table, shouting with hollow voice, "Bianco o rosso, white or red wine?"*

*"Vino nero," Enzo replied and the padrone, roaring for everyone to hear, "Vino nero! I Signori birra vino nero!" Sensing that Nic did not understand why the unsightly company rocked with laughter, Enzo shouted in his ear, "For those who are blind all wine is black."*

*Only then did Nic understand that the assembly of monsters believed that he also was blind. "No!" he cried out. "No! No, it is not true. Turn on the light and let me see . . ."*

He felt a dampness cross his forehead, and he reached up to touch a cool hand against his cheek. "Darling Nora," he cried.

"I think your wife went home a long time ago," an unfamiliar voice replied. "You are having a dream."

He let go the hand and lay back, trying to gather everything together.

"I'm your night nurse. I heard you calling."

"What time is it?"

"It's a quarter to one. Are you wide awake?"

"Yes."

"Because if you aren't, you'll take that dream right back with you into sleep," said the nurse. "Here is some juice for you." She put a glass tube between his lips, and he sucked up the glass of orange.

"You feel better now?"

"Yes, thank you very much."

"Here is a pill," said the voice, "The doctor said if you wake up I must give it to you."

He swallowed the pill and lay back on the bed trying to forget.

He was roused by a whooping voice.

"Wake up! Join the feathered choir."

Sheathed in darkness, he tried to recall where he was. He felt a tugging at his shoulder and heard the voice, which he recognized as Linda's, saying, "Breakfast in half an hour."

"Just bring me coffee," he said.

"You have to eat a good breakfast," Linda said. "It's your last meal."

"My last . . ."

"Before surgery. First you take a bath."

She helped him out of bed and led him into the bathroom where she guided his hand to the sink and towel, the shower faucet, and toilet.

"Don't get your face wet," she cautioned. "You'll loosen the tape on the shield."

He stroked the wall for a light switch and remembered that he had brought the darkness with him. He used the toilet, removed his robe and pajamas, laid them over the toilet tank, and striving to keep his head dry in the gush, took a shower. He dried himself and was standing against the sink brushing his teeth when he heard the nurse hoot, "Breakfast is here. If you don't come out, I'll come in!" He reached for the robe and, not finding it, waited in naked humiliation.

"Never mind. You'll learn," Linda said, bringing his robe. He wondered if her suddenly subdued voice denoted pity.

She guided him into a chair and began spooning oatmeal into his mouth. When that was finished, she directed his hand over the tray, touching toast, egg, bacon, and a warm coffee pitcher. "Good luck!" she said cheerfully and left.

He tried to feed himself and discovered the difficulty of bringing a spoon to his mouth without sight. He raised the cup to his lips and felt warm coffee trickling down his chin.

Linda returned. "Oh, look!" she scolded. "You're piddling all over yourself." He felt shamed by her choice of verb, his childhood argot for pissing.

He heard the clacking of wooden soles and a whirr of wheels.

"Good morning." The voice filling the room like a light was Dr. Sage's. "How are you?"

"Reduced to mewling infancy," Nic replied.

"So I see. What's going on?" The doctor's voice sharpened. "Isn't there someone to help?"

"Well, it's been a busy morning," Linda replied. "Nurses don't feed patients and two aides are on vacation . . ."

"Then who helps patients?" the doctor asked.

"They help themselves."

"Permit me to help you," Dr. Sage gently addressed Nic. "How about fresh coffee? I'd like a cup myself."

Nic heard the doctor leave the room and then return. He drew a chair beside Nic's bed and brought a cup of hot coffee to his lips.

"How was your night?" he asked.

"Calm with scattered turbulence," Nic replied.

"Neatly put. I'm sorry I can't promise clear sailing ahead. Surgery's overbooked and you've been set back to one-thirty."

"Hell, I've been psyching myself up."

"I know," said Dr. Sage, placing a piece of buttered toast in Nic's hand and spooning warm egg to his mouth. "It happens frequently, so don't imagine it's a plot against you. In retinal surgery every case is an emergency, and it's hard to keep a schedule."

"In that case you got a good book I can borrow?"

Dr. Sage laughed. "I'm sure both my literary taste and library would be too lowbrow for you. If I had time to read, that is." He handed Nic a strip of dry bacon and offered more coffee. "I brought wheels to take you to the examining room," he said. "I was opting for a sedan chair, but all our bearers were out jogging, training for a marathon. Are you expecting your wife?"

"At eleven," said Nic. "I had to persuade her to meet her morning class. She was adamant about being here, but I wouldn't allow that. She's under heavy pressure to publish some scholarly articles in an up-or-out tenure situation. She's very ambitious, my wife, and my calamity comes at a bad time for her."

He stopped, wondering why he was telling all this, whether the doctor might be thinking him garrulous. The doctor's amiability was loosening him up. "I feel almost high," he said.

"You are," said Dr. Sage. "The pills are suppressing your anxieties and that's an upper."

"So's the coffee," said Nic.

"Decaffeinated," said the doctor. "If you think you've had enough we'll get underway."

Dr. Sage guided Nic into the wheelchair and rolled the chair forward, arriving finally in a high-ceilinged room where he removed the mask and helped Nic onto a table over which hung a cluster of bright lights. On a smaller table next to it was a sketching folio and an assortment of pens.

The doctor held up the nail of his small finger. "Your retina is about this size," he said. "In my drawing I'll enlarge it to this." He showed Nic a page of the folio embossed with an ellipse the size of a volley ball. "You're going to have to keep the eye open without moving it. Do you see anything?"

"Yes, a tattered red and white flag fluttering in a blue sky. Swiss, I think."

"Say, you'd do great on a Rorschach."

"I did, in a psychology workshop. I was twenty. As I remember, I saw mostly details of female anatomy."

The doctor laughed and continued to work. "Yours may well be the most distinguished eye I've sketched," he said.

"What others have been similarly smitten?"

"This week a city fireman, welder, bank chairman, high school gym teacher, a priest hit by a golf ball, two farmers . . ."

"Three farmers."

"I don't see you out there shoveling *merde* and tugging tits."

"I confess I was once adept at both."

"When I was a kid on the farm so was I," said the doctor. "I didn't much like either."

"Frankly, neither did I. Now I'm happy to have machines performing the rustic rites."

"And you're a writer," said Dr. Sage. "I'm a borderline illiterate who never had time. But I like D. H. Lawrence."

"So do I," said Nic, choosing not to mention how intensely he admired Lawrence or that an English critic had compared his own book to Lawrence.

"It's the way he sees things between men and women," Dr. Sage said. Not simple but deep and misty with always some overlapping. That's how I see them."

The doctor hovered over Nic, peering into his eye with a magnifying glass. When the drawing was finished, Nic asked to see it and the doctor held it up for him. Like a diagram of chain lightning, the sphere was crisscrossed with a network of jagged lines which, explained the doctor, were the rents in the retina. As he looked at the scrambled diagram, Nic's darkest fears returned with a flow of despair.

"Am I reacting excessively?" he asked. "Am I behaving untidily?"

Dr. Sage turned out the lamps. "You have imagination," he said. "You're touching all bases. Because eyes are near the brain, stress upon them is stress also on the nervous system. No surgery affects the nerves more than eye surgery. The fear of blindness is, like fear of death or a child's fear of darkness, a primal, irrational fear. Everyone is frightened. I would be, too, even though I knew my fears were irrational."

"How would you know?"

"I have medical insights, but more important, I know Dr. Burden will not admit the possibility of failure."

He felt the fears subside. But he knew that the calm was temporary, that his anxieties would surge and ebb, that for the voyage lying ahead Dr. Sage had become a necessary helmsman.

Of the surgery he would remember only fragments, the flashes of an incoherent dream. Though Nora would tell him later that it continued for more than three hours, it had seemed to pass quickly. He remembered thinking that his left eye was covered, yet he recalled the presence of four people, the two doctors and two nurses. Perhaps it was only their voices of which he had been aware. He felt the pressure of Dr. Sage's large hand on his shoulder and then the injection of numbing anesthesia, though he could not remember where the needle was inserted.

He had the sense of being in a coma on the edge of sleep, remotely aware but incapable of response, conscious without feeling, alive yet curiously unliving. He heard the snipping of scissors and felt, without pain, its cutting blade. Later he would learn that the scissors had trimmed his lashes and cut suturing threads, that the operation was performed from behind the retina and that there had been no penetration of the eyeball. He was aware of voices speaking in a language only dimly perceived. Comprehensible phrases came through to him . . . "difficult position . . . excessive hemorrhaging . . . intravacular pressures . . ." Straining like an eavesdropper, he was able to hear sentences punctuated by long pauses.

"The breach is more severe than I anticipated . . ."

"I've never had such a reaction . . ."

"The part of the macula of most acute vision . . ."

"I wonder if it will hold . . ."

The voices might have been those of mechanics contemplating fractious pistons and valves while renovating a malfunctioning motor.

He wanted to protest, to cry out that he also was there in the room, that the object under restoration was a human being with human hearing and human feeling. But his own voice would not rise; he was helpless as a comatose apoplectic while the colloquy of voices continued.

And the subdued terrors returned, and he felt the dark tide of his despair flowing over him, sluicing away all trust, and he believed for a certainty he would be blind. He heard an alarmed female voice say, "Blood pressure is up," and a snappish voice order more anesthetic, and he felt the barely perceptible second piercing of a needle. ■

# Poems by Arthur Madson

## Tension

Oh, I have flapped skirts
and shirts and slacks
dresses
pajama tops and bottoms
flapped them all
in the wind
refreshed them in the sun
in the air
was faithful to colors
to pairs
never lost a one
faithful in loaded days
in empty days
through long useless winters.

I've dried underwear
hidden in inside rows
pink and flesh and white
black
brief, elastic
dried them all.
Pillow cases
I've known
and sheets
queen and double
upper, lower, flowered, single
known them all.

I've consorted with clothes pins
with hands, fingers
pinning, snapping, stretching
smoothing
strong hands, fumbling ones
known them smooth and white
tan and calloused
unpinning
known woman's fingers
ringed, jeweled
arthritic.

Wet, heavy loads
stress, distress
tighten, weaken the knots.
Fingers touch and go
colors fade
remembrance forgets
strands part.

A final load
be it row of socks
swim suits and towels
sheets
or tugging wind on emptiness—
I'll scatter pins
disconnect
hit the ground
unfaithful
at last.

## Elm

Planted in a hole we'd dug
just large enough,
the elm took hold and grew and grew.
But the summer foliage,
even the winter bare arch,
began to shade and menace the house;
it made advances,
she said. Down, elm, down.

So then we built a studio room
with northern light and eastern sun
as refuge from the elm,
and there she greened from spring to spring
with music, houseplants, books.
But outlaw elm outside the house
again disturbed her peace;
she said, "Cut down, cut down."

Though straight and strong and wholly sound,
it should, it must, be cropped,
be taken down.
It taps and scrapes the roof and side,
overhangs the house,
clogs the eaves, drops debris,
even though I trim and trim—
a forward elm. "Cut down, cut down."

We had known that elm
through early leaf and autumn shed
for thirty years, and both,
I thought, felt reassured
by its vigor, strength, and health.
But it dominates the house,
she says, obstructs the sun,
tallies the years. "Cut down, cut down."

My analyst assures me
her state is not unsound—
"It's fear of widowhood,"
and counsels, "Cut it down."
And so I did, but
suckers—bushy, murky, spreading
growth springs from the ground
and will not stay cut down.

## The White Light of the Weight Lifter

Yuri Vlasov, the superheavyweight
studies the bar and the machined steel discs on each end of it
studies it as though it were an enemy he must know well
intimately
he is looking through the weight to a blue Ural peak
he is looking through the weight to the black speck of a hovering hawk
he is looking through the weight to the white disc of sun
    baking down on the collective farm
where an ordinary Ukranian woman works alone
    drawing water from a well
her only companions are the hawk and the mare who watches her
    between croppings of grass
the woman is thinking of the violin she has not played in ten years
the woman is thinking of the potatoes she has to peel for the mess hall
she is thinking of the great hydroelectric project
        and her man away driving a bulldozer
she is thinking of the winter to come
    and the men drinking lethally
toasting each other under the table
        a slow form of Russian roulette
Vlasov is looking through the weight to a spring for them
when the woman will work the potato from her fingers
running quick trills
        like snow melt dripping from the eaves of her life
a spring where she has time to ride the mare
            breathe in the wild sweetness of the steppe
a time when the man can work the land he was meant to work
his hands deep in the truth of it

Yuri Vlasov powders his hands
    then stares at the weight
        single minded as a fork lift
his eyes concentrated like dynamite
then takes hold of the weight as though he were a poet
            rooting himself in the pain of his people
then hyperventilating
        jerks it to his chest
an image quicker than the eye
    more graceful than a Pavlova pirouette
then the blaze of white light
      the blaze of white light inside
presses the burden the man and woman carry through their lives
his veins throb with the sun of it
and for an instant his strength is infinite is Atlas' dance
his work done
    he drops the bar as though it disgusts him

far out on the steppe the woman takes the dipper
                of cool water from her lips
for an instant she thought she heard . . . a violin song
for an instant there was a light in her blood
a lightness of spirit
she knows then they will make it
she knows she will play in the spring

*Jeffery Lewis*

# *At Flood Tide*

**By Emily Meier**

Overnight the change began. The wind blew and blew, humming in the outside corners of the house like a shaking guitar string, and in the morning the sky was clear, the air mild, and the snow that lay in a stiff triangle below the northern slope started to crack. Where the sun shone, brown creases ran everywhere and snow sank in pools into the earth, and by noon the creek had swollen to the height of its banks and was racing hard through the valley, hissing along like a giant snake.

Franklin Gage eyed it, listening. A tall man, he looked even taller at the top of the hill above the creek, for he stood with the rigor of a watched guard, and, though he was wearing a khaki jacket and black hip waders, he gave an overall impression of calm and elegant grayness that came in part from his graying hair and gray-flecked beard, but more from the feeling one got in looking at him that his best suits, his favorite sweater, his car, and his dog would all be gray.

In spite of this appearance he made of coolness, Franklin Gage was in a state of some excitement. In five years of coming from the city for weekends at his country farmhouse, he had never seen the creek flood, and although he felt his morning vigil and his solitary trip the night before to start the fire and turn on the water in the house had earned him the right to have the scene to himself, he wished (rather sharply, he realized) that Amanda, his wife, would arrive soon so she wouldn't miss it. Amanda was the one, after all, who watched the place by seasons, jotting down frost dates and bird migrations, rainfall, the color of caterpillars, the sites of trillium and jack-in-the pulpit and snakeroot. Of the two of them, she was the informed, the natural naturalist.

Franklin unbuttoned his jacket. There were the two Amandas, of course—Amanda the sophisticate who seemed always carefully and freshly arranged—just dressed in something tailored or muted but iridescent, wonderful with her hair shining and pulled slightly back at one ear so the hoop of her earring showed—the Amanda who conquered guests with perfect food and better wit and who claimed she liked the people here because they seemed original, but who actually, he knew, liked them because the garbagemen and loggers, the caretaker, and the farmers up and down the road had all fallen in love with her.

To him, that Amanda had a hint of artifice, at times a suggestion of uncertainty and self-consciousness. But the other Amanda, who could work until midnight readying her gallery for a show and be up at dawn to start working again and who had raised her sons with a kind of diligent prescience and who logged a weekend almanac, had a capacity for absorption which seemed somehow to defy the notion of self, and that was the Amanda who, if she hurried now, would see the flood and who, in a sense, would keep it for them.

Franklin started down the hill toward the creek. Whitewater was pounding in the current and where rivulets of water ran into the creek a muddy foam had backed up on the snow. It was the start, he realized, of the flood. Water spread out suddenly across the land, moving forward in an irregular curve, its course like the path of an army staggered in its advance by terrain, and Franklin tried to hear the water as an army, as a racket of tanks and mortars and screaming men and falling bodies all fused into a giant roar, but it stayed in his mind instead—thunderously, insistently—as water. And now there were other sounds, too—the scolding worry of a flock of birds circling on the hillside and the faint sound of his own name called down to him.

He turned around. Amanda was at the top of the hill. She waved and he crunched through the snow, climbing up the hill to her.

"There's your flood," he said. He kissed her. "It's a river. Did you sell anything?"

"It wasn't a client."

"Well you're here," Franklin said. There was a strained note in Amanda's voice, he thought, and though it puzzled him, he let it go. "Come on down. It's like all the fountains in Italy when you're closer to it."

"Are we skiing? We're not skiing," she said. "I'll have to change. Ah—look at him! My God, it's a crane, isn't it—or a heron?"

An enormous blue bird with beating wings had come in low over the creek and seemed to hesitate, ready to land, but then it kept going, flapping away into the trees. "A heron," Amanda said. Her voice was quiet and Franklin could barely hear her over the noise of the water.

"You know what all this reminds me of?" he asked.

"You said Italy."

"Besides that. The water, being on the water—going into Dun Laoghaire with the hills all white in the mist and the sun rays streaking through the clouds into the water and the gulls flying at the speed of the ship."

"And we've never gone back."

"It's reminded me of that whole trip. The whole year. What it reminded me of was you."

Amanda laughed. She slipped her hand along her neck and then looked at him.

"You remember that summer?"

"Of course." She was quiet, staring again at the creek, and Franklin knew they were in the same place, on the old broad back stairs in the Victoria and Albert Museum with him going up to hunt for tiles and her sitting down on a step and looking up at the ceiling. It was the first time he had seen her, twelve years before, and he had remembered forever after that she had looked like a woman who was attached in all the important places—to a man, to a family and work and her own history, and that he had liked that apprehension of her as fully a woman and settled, and had needed only the startling information that there was no man, that he had died in Vietnam, in order to allow himself to take her seriously.

"What's England full of?" she said, her eyes still on the creek.

"Loot. What do the English attack with on the stairway to the Tube?"

"Umbrellas. What can't they live without?"

"Queuing. Secret—no, official sin."

They were both laughing, and then Amanda turned back toward the house. "I'm tired. The traffic was bad. I think I'll read," she said, and there was the edge to her voice again that seemed to warn him away.

For the rest of the afternoon, Franklin occupied himself watching the creek and cutting dead branches for firewood. He had traded his hip waders for work boots, and the melted snow seeping through the leather made his feet feel as damp to him as all England. Everything, suddenly, reminded him of England. The sky was blue, but the creek crashed along as impudently as the ocean bumped up on the pier in Brighton and his toes squished as they always did in England, where he'd even abandoned his bachelorhood with wet feet, instead of cold ones, his shoes squeaking as he ran up the steps to the flat where Amanda's friends lived—the standard English artist's flat, she said, with white walls and paper globes on the light fixtures—and got married in a room filled with roses from the garden and with Amanda's small sons in attendance, both dressed in short pants.

It had been, he thought, as daring a thing as he had ever done, giving up at thirty five the carefully nurtured habits of his single life. He had always expected that he would do it some time. In fact, he had had a scenario in mind, complete with a previously disposed of first husband (he'd never quite thought to kill him off), to make the match, in his view, more liable to steadiness. He had wanted a woman who was over the rough spots, clear about who she was and what she needed and Amanda had suited perfectly. What had surprised him, though, was how abruptly she became essential to him and how, at times, he had an unsettling feeling of pain when he looked at the long muscles of her thighs and the faint stretch marks on her breasts and saw them as records, in some way important, of a life that preceded him.

Franklin carried the last of the wood he had cut across the yard and put it in a pile by the shed. The thin rifts the sun had made in the snow were muddy swaths now that cut everywhere into the hillsides and far edges of the valley, and the creek had settled into a new course, sweeping urgently along through the center of the valley and hurling felled branches into stranded trees in a kind of dumb show in which the noise of the impact was suffocated by the water. The water covered every sound. Even the whir of the chain saw that ragged at his mind was muted by its boom. He did not think he could escape it. He did not know even if he wanted to, and his eyes searched across the water, hunting for something, for anything unexpected.

What he found instead was the shimmer of sunlight, bouncing from the water and mirrored back to him, to the image that had stayed in his mind, of Amanda and her long thighs and her breasts with their tiny pitted marks that disappeared when she moved. He took his jacket from the tree branch and went inside to find her.

"Amanda?" He started up the stairs.

There was a movement in the dining room, and she had answered him before he started back down. "In here."

"You're dressed already. Are we going out?"

"I thought we would." She was smoking at the window, looking out at the creek, and she was wearing a dress he'd never seen before that looked like rainbows sewn together, and there was something in the line of her back that made her seem as unapproachable now as she had earlier.

He waited.

"Do we need reservations?"

"Are you hungry already?"

"No—impatient." She had turned around and her eyes had darted at him and back across the room, and she brushed at her forehead with the hand that had the cigarette in it. "I feel like being somewhere else."

"I like your dress." He waited a minute longer, looking at her, and then he went up to the bedroom to change.

The restaurant, when they arrived, was nearly empty and they took a table in the darkest corner and sat down facing the bar.

"I don't think we'll break the record," Franklin said, stirring his drink.

"I saw two—by the door there." Amanda was looking at her menu, and Franklin smiled at her and thought how quickly they could call up a whole history for themselves: twenty-two leisure suits spotted here in one night and Amanda certain that Minneapolis, being close by, had set the style—Minneapolis the place they'd picked to live after London because Amanda wouldn't go back to San Francisco and because he was tired of the perpetual sense of the outsider that lingered with him in New York and because Minneapolis dangled the job for him—a lot of money in the business end of the theater.

They could be mocking about it, at times, saying at a certain hour of a certain kind of evening with friends that they'd stayed on because Minneapolis, with its food conglomerates and Dayton-Hudson (the corporate force behind the spread of the bookstore chain) was the actual center of the nation's stomach and collective mind or because they couldn't really leave a place where the shopping centers, the dales—Southdale, Ridgedale, Brookdale, Rosedale—were subliminally important enough to have given the country a vice president.

Mornings after that kind of night Amanda always said she felt "morally sullied," and he would groan or laugh and go off and find the aspirin bottle.

"We're awful," Amanda said aloud, keeping up with him.

"Only a little," he answered, covering her hands with his. "What should we eat?"

"I don't know—steak. Fish. I don't think I'm hungry."

"Have another drink then." He motioned for the waitress and watched while she picked up their empty glasses and went back to the bar.

"Well, if we don't ski, if it's all slush tomorrow, what are we going to do?" he asked.

"It might snow. Oh, we could take a drive. We could go out at dawn and drive up and down the street in—what's the name of it?—Winnow."

"If I can find it again." He leaned back while the waitress put his glass down, and he remembered the place Amanda was talking about, a little damp town in the gray morning with wind bells chiming on what used to be the front of the tourist home. "We could always go back early."

"I don't think so."

"No?"

"I don't want to be there either. Franklin, aren't you ever going to ask me what's wrong?"

"What's wrong?"

She was twisting at the chain on her neck, and she looked at him and then at her drink and back at him again. "I said it wasn't a client this morning. It was a printmaker from Los Angeles Joe Speers sent."

"So?"

"He reminded me of Peter."

"Who?"

"Peter." Her voice had gotten higher, and Franklin remembered abruptly that her first husband's name had been Peter and he nodded his head. Peter.

"He didn't really look like him—well, maybe something about the way his eyes were set. But he was the age Peter would be, and his work was just what Peter's would be like now if he were still alive."

"That's a big guess."

"It's not. It was this uncanny thing. The ink seemed to come right off the paper at me. It was like an assault. It was like being knocked in the rib cage." Amanda's face had gone pale, and she kept moving her hands in the air as if she couldn't hold them still.

"You want the whitefish?" Franklin said. The waitress had come up, and he placed their order and then leaned forward on his elbows. "What did you do?"

"I told him to leave. I said we weren't that kind of gallery. And then after he left, I sat there shaking for a half hour."

"But you're all right now?" Franklin picked his fork up and drew it along the tablecloth.

"I don't know. It scared me." Abruptly Amanda took the fork from him and set it down at right angles to hers. "Is it all right I told you? I've always tried not to talk about him except to the boys."

"Of course you can talk about him if you want to. I thought it embarrassed you."

"What?"

Franklin straightened the watch on his wrist. "You know. The war. The Vietnam thing."

Amanda was staring at him as if she could not quite understand what he'd said. "You thought it embarrassed me," she said slowly. She picked up both forks and pushed them, tines down, into the tablecloth. "Franklin, you think I'm embarrassed because the man I was married to got killed in Vietnam?"

"Well, something like that. Understand me, Amanda. To hear them talk, everybody we know was a peace marcher or a draft evader, and I just always supposed you'd find it awkward dragging out his Purple Heart or whatever—that kind of thing."

"You can say that?" Amanda dropped both forks. She rubbed her hands roughly along her forearms. "My God, Franklin," she said in a kind of shudder. "Embarrassed! What an astonishing thing to say." She stared at him, whitely still.

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**The water covered every sound. He did not think he could escape; he did not know even if he wanted to.**

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It was only after their meal had come, after he had finished his steak and Amanda half of her fish that she finally spoke again. "Listen, Franklin. So maybe that war was wrong. So it was all wrong." She laid her napkin down and folded it over. "But he wasn't wrong. For a million reasons he couldn't have been."

Franklin looked past her, over her head. "I didn't mean that he was. Sorry if you thought that. Let's forget it. Truce, Amanda." He lifted his wine glass and his other hand. "We can drink to the flood."

When they had finished their wine, when they had had coffee and cognac and watched the tables in the

restaurant fill up, it seemed to Franklin that Amanda's mood had started to pass. They were a little drunk, actually, and when they went out to the car, she held onto his arm and looked up through the trees, hunting galaxies. "It's still warm," she said. "I think it's fifty."

"Forty-five," he said.

"A dollar it's fifty."

"O.K.—'out of sight?' "

"McTeague—'outta sight, outta sight.' "

" 'Tell it to the marines?' "

"Balzac. 'Looking out for number one'?"

"You got me."

"*The Ambassadors.*"

"Oh, come on! James?"

"Himself."

"Put another dollar on for that." She was laughing. She was in the car, leaning back in the corner of her seat against the door, but still there was something, ever so slight, a just palpable coolness.

"Should we go to the movie?"

"If you want. No, let's go home." She pushed her shoes off and looked out the window as he drove. "I don't like it," she said in a while, "an early spring. It won't last. We'll hate the rest of winter."

"Maybe." They were driving through the darkest stretch of road, and he flashed his bright lights on and slowed down for the last curve before their driveway.

"What would it be like," Amanda said when he'd parked the car and they'd gotten out, "if all of them smashed their security lights?" She was looking off across the distance at the green lights that dotted the countryside. "We'd have a wilderness," she answered herself. "It would be the ends of the earth."

"The creek's still flooded," he said. "Walk down with me?"

"It's too cold."

"It's fifty. Here's your dollar."

"In these shoes," she said, but she had started out ahead of him and he watched her dress float out below her jacket and her hair puff out on her shoulders. "You coming?" she said, looking back at him. "We need a sled."

"It wouldn't budge. Put your weight forward so your heels don't sink."

"What if I get stuck in this snow and muck and the temperature drops and I freeze to death?"

"You could take your shoes off and escape first."

"I like these shoes."

"Amanda, I think you're drunk."

"I'm not." She had put her hands in her pockets and started off down the hillside, walking easily, as he knew she would, sure-footed in the way of a mountain goat.

"Beautiful night," he said.

"What?" The noise of the creek had taken over, and Amanda looked back at him and he pointed at the sky, which was full of stars and a scatter of clouds that had moved in from the west and rolled swiftly across the moon.

"It's so dark and so light," Amanda said, waiting for him and then talking into his ear. They were closer to the water now and the sound of it came at them with different voices—frontally, obliquely, a reedy clatter from the west and, to the east, a dying, black tumble of sound falling away from them into the woods.

"So truce," Amanda said, raising her arms to him, and he reached his hands around her, under her jacket, and he wanted all at once to make love to her with the rush of water pounding in his ears and a chilly crust of snow pushing up between them, but she had gone abruptly rigid against him.

"There," she whispered. He half twisted, looking over his shoulder where she was staring at the thin island of land that lay now between two channels of water. The heron was there, his wings hunched back along his body, one leg bent and poised. He was there watching them. Then he moved. He straightened his leg and dipped his beak into the water and then lumbered into the sky and flew away.

"Do you think he lives here?" Franklin said, but Amanda had pushed away from him and was going on down the hillside. She pulled her shoes off.

"What are you doing?" he called. She had reached the water's edge, and she took one long step forward and down, holding her skirt up so the bottom of her hem just drifted out along the water.

"Amanda!" he yelled. She was in the water now, up to her waist, up to her neck. Before he could reach her, though, she had thrashed and scrambled her way back up on the land.

"Amanda," he said, "what in the world?" She was coughing, panting a little. Maybe she was crying. He wrung the water out of her skirt and tried pulling her shoes on.

"Dammit," she said. She was shivering, and the water came off her like water from a shaking dog. He tugged at her shoe strap.

"Come on," he said. He had his arm around her. She was drenched and she was crying.

"No. Not yet. Not yet." She stood with her shoes half on and her lips trembling. "Franklin, I have to say this." Her voice was husky. "Not this ever again. No floods, no more giant birds in the night. I didn't marry you for that." Her mouth had gone purple, and she was hanging onto his jacket sleeve. "I can't bear it. I can't live that way again the way it was with him—all the passion, all the miraculous *wildness*!"

"Come on, Amanda," he said. He was pushing her, half carrying her up the hill, his arm soaked where he held her around the waist, and he was reaching, in his mind, for the light they had left burning by the kitchen sink, for the heat radiating from the stove. "All right, Amanda," he said. Her teeth chattered and her wet skirt rasped against her knees and, behind him, in the noise of the dark, he thought he heard the creek growing quiet, that it receded now, inch by inch, into its banks. ■

# Poems by

## The Horses

Fred Boynton trained a pair of matched dark bays
that he showed off merely by driving them
from his high farm down through the village streets.
He bought a special harness with bright brass
to light it here and there; he kept the bays
curried and combed to match the polished gear.
They moved in majesty beneath the reins.

One dull March day, unbidden, unhandseled,
his drunken foreman hitched the team and drove
down Main Street just in time to reach the tracks
as the three-thirty train came rumbling through
toward Montreal.
The engine caught the bays
and smashed them to one side; a tangled mass
of flesh and jutting bone and riven straps
and gouts of blood and gouting blood thrown on
the grimy snowbank humped along the tracks.

One horse still lived, screaming its agony
out of its shattered mouth: death shrill, death shrill.
A man came from the nearest car. He pulled
a pistol from his pocket, shot the horse,
and then climbed back, grim-faced, into the car.
The gathered crowd grew yet more silent then.

One of the low on whom an arrogance
had sat like pig dung on a barnyard boot,
the foreman disappeared.
Never went back,
not even for his clothes. Just disappeared:
he knew what Boynton's mind would be if they
should ever meet again, set face to face.

Fred Boynton took the broken bodies back
to his high farm. He couldn't dig them in:
the March earth still retained its winter freeze.
He left them on the highest point above
the ice-packed river flowing far below.
He couldn't dig them in: he left them there
to start their journey down into the farm
beneath the wet March winds.

Sometimes I think
of ghost bays grazing on that high high hill
on grass and shrubs that grow in their ghost world
beyond this world, beyond this wrench of time—
in endless summer past this wrench of time.

# John Bennett

## Tenure Ended

Some farms descended slowly into drear:
bleak beyond bleakness, weathered clapboards sprung
around the nails and curling out, the roofs
patched here and there with tin and tarpaper,
the front yards burdock havens, and the fields
more filled with pigweed than they were with corn.

Such a place was Harry Cram's.
His family'd
held on to it for near a hundred years.
But Harry was the last, a bachelor
who lived in furtive loneness—and worked small
enough to let the farmwork grow and grow
into a labor past herculean.

He thought that raising chickens was a way
to cure his dying farm: sold cow and horse
to put the money into feathered flesh.
It did not/could not/would not prosper there:
no matter what he did, his chickens grew
only to scrawniness—and caught each ill
that they could catch
And Harry Cram, like them,
grew scrawnier until a rack of bones
was all he tottered through a failing world.

Early one summer morning, he went out
to his ramshackle barn and hanged himself,
the frayed rope tied in granny knots around
a sagging beam.
The rope and beam both held:
a neighbor found him, found a gaunt of bones
swinging in dusty air while just below
some scrawny chickens scratched and pecked among
the old barn refuse scattered on the floor.

# Heavy Cream

**By Karlton Kelm**

After all these years I get this letter from my cousin in Wisconsin. In his old age he wants to reminisce.

"Remember that fat girl you got me the date with? I didn't act very nice, and I often think of it."

So here in New Jersey, I think of it. We were both going to Columbia College in Dubuque, Iowa, where I lived, he as a boarder, and I as a day student. The fat girl was John's sister's friend. John was my friend, and the boy who was to be her date for the school dance was my cousin Kevin. John's sister Virginia was my date, and if I had seen her friend in time, I wouldn't have arranged a date for her with my cousin.

In a way, I blamed Virginia. She knew how fussy Kevin was about his dates, more fussy than I, and I wouldn't be dating her if she looked like that. I guess she didn't pick her friends for their figures, but she didn't have to dance with them.

This fat girl was her best friend, home with her from Sarah Lawrence for the Easter holiday. Virginia wanted the best date for her I could find, but she should have warned me. Naturally I thought any girl as attractive as Virginia would have an attractive best friend, not someone as big as Kate Smith, whose moon was coming over the mountain to great acclaim in spite of her size. John said he would have warned me if he'd seen her before the date was set, but what to do after? I told him what I'd have done for him in such circumstances. I'd have said, "Look, John, this girl is heavy cream, extra heavy," and he could take it from there.

I'm not sure that term was even used then, possibly not till the fifties, when, still unmarried, still dating, I moved east to another job. By then Kevin had had several wives: twice divorced, once a widower. But to get gack to the fat girl: though John didn't warn me, I warned Kevin. That was after I got a look at her downtown with Virginia doing some last-minute shopping for a dress. Just something big enough to cover her, I suppose, and I came near directing them to a sporting-goods store to look at tents.

I didn't blame Kevin too much for what he did, or didn't do, after I was cousin and friend enough to warn him. As for John, why didn't he date his sister's friend if he didn't know how fat she was. Said he'd made a date before he knew Virginia was bringing home a friend. Usually John wasn't a liar, but in his position, I might have lied too. And now that I look back, she wasn't all that fat either, but to college kids in the 1930s she seemed better suited to a carnival sideshow than a dance floor.

This dance was to be at our town's best hotel, the Julien Dubuque, not in the college gym like our more informal dances. The guys all wore tuxes; the girls, long evening gowns. Only Myra Burden, the town showoff, came in one of the new pants-suits introduced by Marlene Dietrich in the movies. Virginia's friend was an ardent admirer of Dietrich and her "sewing circle" in Hollywood. She'd brought along such an outfit, but Virginia talked her out of wearing it to the dance, so at least we were spared seeing her in pants!

Kevin did send her a corsage, but it was lost among the bigger, brighter flowers of her dress. He backed out of coming with me in Mother's car to pick them all up, promising to meet us in the hotel lobby. A sore foot was his excuse, an old basketball injury that came in handy when he needed it.

Virginia was dreamy in turquoise chiffon set off by her platinum-blond bob, Jean Harlow style. Her slenderness contrasted unconscionably with the avoirdupois of her friend. She looked upset when I arrived without Kevin. John understood, but their mother had something to say. "How on earth is he going to dance with Colette if he can't even come to collect her?"

A good question, and "collect" was exactly the right word—more suitably with a light truck than Mother's trim De Soto.

I told Mrs. Frantzen that Kevin was saving his foot for dancing, but she was unconvinced. Virginia managed a smile, and from Colette's remarkably dainty mouth came only one word: "Men!" Then after she got into a shabby old raccoon coat from the twenties, which made her look all the larger next to Virginia's sleek indigo velvet evening wrap, we set out to pick up John's girl, Sharon, a cute redhead in lime-colored chiffon.

In the car Colette remarked that she wouldn't trade "Daddy's" coonskin coat for Russian sables, and about her dress: "Virgie wanted me to accentuate the vertical with something plain, dark, and down to the floor, like the Queen Mother of England, but I said, 'Hardeehar, I'd have to be seven-feet tall for it to take effect.' So I'm just fighting fire with fire, the way we do with our big forests out West. That's Elsa Maxwell's way with clothes. Big-figured prints to keep eyes off her and on the dress. Someday I'm going to be America's number one party-giver. Or Washington's hostess with the mostest, like Perle Mesta. With all Daddy's money and political clout, how can I not?"

Daddy was the notorious senior senator from California.

Colette's bright orange taffeta flared and flounced, big purple medallionlike blossoms plastered on, so that not seeing her for the dress was almost true. As I dropped them under the hotel marquee before parking, it seemed that the other two girls were at least partly convinced, but only John kept nodding his full approval, natural-born diplomat.

## II

There would be fruit punch in the ballroom, but that wasn't going to satisfy Colette. "We're all underage for the hotel bar, but isn't there somewhere we can get setups like during Prohibition?" she asked me when I joined them in the lobby. "I have the booze," she added, patting her tummy flounces.

"Shh," I cautioned, leading the way to the hotel's coffee shop. "A few of the kids do bring the hard stuff, but if they're caught . . ."

"Fiddledeedee," said Colette, quoting the book heroine of the year. "I'd just give Daddy a call in Washington."

Kevin was nowhere in sight, but Colette, for one, didn't seem particularly concerned. I hoped I wasn't going to end up with two partners, the way Mother said her brother used to if she didn't have a date and her papa insisted she be taken along as his extra girl.

We weren't the only ones getting setups in the coffee shop. Myra Burden was there with her date, a baby-faced freshman. A couple of years out of Radcliffe, Myra still preferred college or even high school boys.

"Order your favorite mixes and I'll do the spiking under the table," Colette instructed. "All on me, kids. How about sandwiches? I'm starved."

"We just had dinner," said Virginia.

"Eons ago. Roast beef for me. Who else?"

Following Virginia's example, the rest of us politely declined.

"Keep that bottle down," cautioned John. I knew he didn't want to embarrass his father who was a prominent lawyer seeking to become judge.

Myra Burden came over to our table. "Glad to see others not content with that piss they're serving upstairs. I know you all, don't I?" She stared at Colette. "That dress! Out of this world. Either you got it in Paris or made it yourself."

"Paris," Colette admitted slyly, with a wink to the rest of us, "but I added a few touches."

"But of course, you're Senator Huddlestone's daughter. I've seen you in the news with him. He's even bigger than you."

At least she didn't say fatter.

Virginia performed the introductions, though none were necessary with Myra Burden. "Sit down, boys," Myra ordered John and me, just as bossy as Colette. That might have indicated trouble, but right off they got along great. "If this shindig's too much of a drag, we'll go to my house. The parents are in Chicago and the bar's loaded."

"Okay by me," said Colette.

"Well," said Virginia after Myra returned to her own table, "I've known the Burdens all my life, but this is the first time I've been invited to their home. DARs and all that. Colette does this to people."

"I and Elsa Maxwell," said Colette, diving into her roast-beef sandwich. "Is your cousin as pretty as you?" she asked me, as if she hadn't heard from Virginia.

"He's probably looking all over for us," I told her. Then after swallowing all of my gin and tonic, which Colette had made 99 percent gin, I hurried back to the lobby for another look around before going up to the ballroom. No, he wouldn't dare, I thought, knowing he would.

The dance floor wasn't too crowded yet; so I was quick to spot Kevin with some floozy he'd probably picked up on his way down from college. She wasn't even wearing a party dress, but a red sweater and tight black skirt much shorter than the just-below-the-calf length that year. Kevin waved and grinned, then they swung across the highly waxed floor to me. Swing had just arrived and was being played by our big band from Chicago. Not Glenn Miller, the Dorseys, or Ted Weems (too expensive) but a new one started up by Bing Crosby's brother Bob. The ballroom was festooned with the usual patriotic bunting plus artificial flowers, Easter bunnies, and our own school banners of blue and gold. "Where is she?" asked Kevin, his dark eyes twinkling mischievously, while the girl he didn't bother to introduce laughed, as if it were all a big joke.

I told him it would've been better not to show up at all than with somebody else, but he only shrugged. "Oh, I'll dance with her," he offered magnanimously. "At least, once." And when he saw I still wasn't appeased: "You shouldn't have warned me, Larry." That was the thanks I got.

**Colette and Myra cut the rug with the lindy hop and boogie-woogie, while the rest of us applauded.**

Back in the coffee shop I reported, "Of course he's here. Thought we'd meet him upstairs." So they finished their drinks and we all went up, followed by Myra Burden and her gang. "Really!" said Virgie when she saw him dancing, her mother's look in her eye. So I waved him down, and dutifully he unloaded his pickup on one of the stags, then gracefully made his way through the dancers to us, forgetting to limp. "Wow," he said when I introduced him to Colette. She did have a very pretty face, only too much of it.

"Thanks for the orchid, how's the foot?" she asked him, and we all waited for his answer.

"Thought I could loosen it up dancing till you got here, but it only made it worse. Mind if we sit this one out?"

But Myra Burden had a better idea. "Go soak it in the punch bowl, Kev. I've got this dance with your date." Myra used to chase after my cousin and nearly got him expelled, keeping him out in the family Pierce Arrow after bedcheck.

If there was anything Kevin hated to see, it was two girls dancing together, but for once he didn't mind and hurried back to his girl, overdoing the limp now. John and I danced with our girls to a swing arrangement of "Smoke Gets In Your Eyes," sung by Bob Crosby, while Myra Burden's baby-faced date emptied a whole quart of gin in the punch bowl.

At first Myra and Colette did more talking than dancing, simply taking one step forward and one step back, to keep time to the music, but that was before it got faster and the jitterbugging began. For her size Colette was remarkably light on her feet, especially after she and Myra themselves poured more gin in the punch. After which others took courage and added whiskey, rum, even Southern Comfort, until that punch bowl, barely dipped into before, became the most popular spot on the floor. Colette and Myra really went to town then, truckin' and cuttin' the rug, fingers waving in the air and hips tossing. They were dancing the lindy hop and boogie-woogie, while the rest of us circled around, cheering them on.

"Where did she learn that?" I heard Kevin exclaim, meaning Colette who was doing the leading, though it was Myra wearing the pants. He'd always prided himself on being first to introduce new dance steps to Dubuque. He tried to dance with Colette, but she was always engaged with another of Myra's old boyfriends. In fact, dancing with that big girl became the thing to do. Of course the spiked punch didn't hurt either. The chaperones pretended not to notice, and everyone said it was the best Easter dance we ever had. Never did get to Myra Burden's; we were having too much fun where we were. Anyway, Virginia refused to go there after Myra included Kevin in the party; he'd agreed to abandon the short-skirted one. That was when Virgie stood up for the girl, and having a few too many punches in her, slapped my cousin's face right on the dance floor. "This is for Colette and your other girl," she told him."

Kevin's naturally rosy cheeks got even rosier, though he still managed to look innocent. "Hell, she wouldn't even dance with me," he kept saying, meaning Colette, as if that fully vindicated him. When I tried to intervene, Virginia accused me of being in on the whole thing from the start, and threatened to go home in a taxi. Colette managed to stop her by dramatically kissing Kevin on the mouth to show she bore him no hard feelings. Claimed to've had a better time without a partner; for Christ's sake, she'd had so many. Sounded a little sacrilegious on Easter morn, but had a calming effect on Virgie. Then John offered the compromise. "We'll all go to our house for scrambled eggs, same as last year. Mother's half-expecting us anyway."

"All but him," specified Virgie, pointing at Kevin. So Myra said Kev could come with her gang, with or without his girl.

Virginia and I were barely speaking when we left for home with Colette, John, and Sharon, even before the band played "Goodnight Ladies." If we had brought Kevin with us, her mother wouldn't have known what happened at the dance. As it was, all we could hope was that she'd gone to bed, and by morning a sobered-up daughter wouldn't tell her. But she was waiting in the doorway of their white-pillared house, a righteous-if-squat tower of indignation in flowing black negligee. "I knew it," she cried. "He didn't show."

"Now Ma," began John.

"Don't you 'Ma' me, John Aloysius Frantzen. All I have to do is look in my little girl's eyes to see what happened. Right, Colette?"

"Well, it was this way," began Colette, but before she could get any further the woman cried, "Skip it, I can see that you're all in the cover-up. But the whole town will know by morning."

That did it for Virginia who began to cry. "Oh, Mother, it was terrible," she said between sobs. "I was so ashamed."

"You'd think it happened to her!" said her brother.

Scorching him with a look, Mrs. Frantzen took her daugher to her expansive bosom and led the way into the house. Then suddenly pulling away from the girl: "You've been drinking, I can smell it." And turning on me: "Did you get my little girl intoxicated, Larry Holman? It wasn't enough what your cousin did to her best friend. You got them all tipsy, including my son!"

And to think I almost got her as a mother-in-law. In vain Colette tried to convince her she had supplied the Easter cheer.

"Never," said the woman. "Not a Sarah Lawrence girl. You're only protecting Larry Holman. No Easter breakfast for any of you, only strong black coffee. Daughter, up to your room! Colette can make the coffee, she seems to hold her liquor better than the rest of you. I don't know what Mr. Frantzen will say. If he weren't sound asleep, I'd get him down here."

I offered to take them to my house for breakfast, but Mother Frantzen wouldn't hear of it. "My children aren't going anywhere at this hour," she told me, "so you can't patch things up that way. As for that cousin of yours, I'm calling your mother first thing in the morning."

Finally Colette said, "Regardless of what Virgie and John do, Mrs. Frantzen, I'm going to Larry's with Sharon. All this has made me quite famished. And if you won't leave the door open, or give me a key, I'll get a room at the Julien Dubuque."

Mother Frantzen knew when she was beat. She couldn't have Senator Huddlestone's daughter walk out on her in the middle of the night. "All right, have the damn eggs here, all of you. Virginia can stay down to help, because I'm certainly not going to. But none of you has heard the last of this. Not even you, Colette. I'm not at all sure I mayn't have to write your daddy."

"Okay by me, Mrs. Frantzen. I'll tell him anyway. You see, I don't have to be afraid to."

With no further comment, the woman went upstairs.

"Happy Easter!" Colette called after her, and we all joined in: "Happy Easter."

## III

Easter Sunday or not, Mother had a call from Mrs. Frantzen whom she knew only from bridge parties and church socials. I was on the upstairs extension. "Didn't that boy's parents train him to be a gentleman?" she was asking. So naturally Mother had to defend her brother and his wife. She said that while they certainly wouldn't approve of what their son had done, they did believe, as she did, it was better not to interfere too much with the young people. Mrs. Frantzen replied that obviously if Mother and her brother had interfered a little more, all this wouldn't have happened. Whereupon Mother said she didn't see why I should be included in the blame, and Mrs. Frantzen said it was I who arranged the date and supplied the liquor. Mother said I never took liquor to dances, and I was only doing Virginia a favor in getting her friend a date. Mrs. Frantzen said that kind of favor was one her daughter could well do without. Mother said then let Virginia's brother arrange dates for her friends hereafter, and Mrs. Frantzen said not to worry, there would be no more dates between our two families if she had anything to say about it. Then Mother said that was fine with her, and hung up on the woman.

When I got downstairs she was crying and told me everything I already knew, adding: "And don't you ever go near that Frantzen girl again!"

"But you just told her mother you don't interfere with the young people," I reminded, and she dried her eyes quickly. "You were listening in." Then all in the same breath: "Do you think if I baked a nice cake and sent it up with you—?"

"With me?" I asked. "How do you know I'll be going there again?"

She didn't say, and before she could even get the eggs cracked, our doorbell rang and Colette burst in. She was still wearing Daddy's raccoon coat and carrying Easter lilies. "For you, Larry's mother," she said. "John brought me here in his father's La Salle, but he's afraid to come in after the Battle of the Mothers. I phoned Daddy and he said to take us all to the Julien Dubuque for dinner. On him."

"What a sweet man," said Mother. "Will Mrs. Frantzen go?"

"She'll have to. Mr. Frantzen already accepted for both of them."

"He must be another sweet man," said Mother.

"The only male chauvinist I admire. Made me swear to lose fifty pounds before I come home with Virgie again. As a boy he felt the same as Larry's cousin about fat girls. That's more than even Daddy admits."

"To begin with, take off that heavy coat, dear," suggested Mother, then went to the door to call John in for coffee. "Larry, put out that nice apple kuchen I got at the German bakery."

Around the kitchen table Mother cut kuchen for all of us, but reluctantly Colette passed hers on to John as he joined us. "Looks out of this world," she said, as Myra Burden had said of her dress, "but it's now or never."

"Make it never," said John. "I like you the way you are."

"Hardeehar," said Colette. "That's why you took Sharon to the dance."

But to get back to, or ahead to, my cousin's letter, he finishes by writing: "If you ever see that fat girl again, even though she's an old woman by now, will you tell her how sorry I am?"

So I write: "What fat girl? She may be older than Gloria Vanderbilt, but is exactly her size. Never became another Perle Mesta or an Elsa Maxwell, but opened a reducing salon in Los Angeles with branches all over the country. Don't you read the papers?"

I still get Christmas cards from Virginia and her husband, a Columbia grad she met while at Sarah Lawrence. Columbia University that is. Her brother John finally married Sharon and still practices law in Dubuque, same as his father did. I don't read the papers a lot either, but I do know that, like me, Colette never married, though there were always rumors. I saw her on one of those TV talk shows, where she said something about it being the old choice between marriage and a career. But as I wrote Kevin, people seem to have both these days.

Married or not, she looked great.■

## Hornet and Pear

We walk as far as the shattered tree
with its single pear. You name things for me
bold as Adam: foxtail millet, Spanish grass.
Nightfall, neverfail, catches us
without a stitch between us, as the birds circle home
to light. Your kiss cleats to my lip: and I notice
your woodsman's smell of creosote and raw furs.
Heart set, and three months' gone, I'll ignore
the symbols prodding at my ribs: that hornet
staggering away, too fat to fly, from the pear
gone leadbelly gray around its neat drill holes:
and the white fox skin nailed to the shed door.

*Margaret Benbow*

## Portraits of the Fathers
(in the Church at Koshkonong)

Because God had read the Old Testament
they were prodigal in their
severity, these old preachers—
bearded, prophetic Norwegians
who took sermons seriously
and craved sobriety like wine.

It was their nature to be stern,
they were northern men
for whom God was always winter.
Their eyes were harsh
as white-washed churches,
their voices rumbled like judgment.

They came to America
bearing what life had given,
believing it was their fate
to praise the gray stones,
to love the bitter sky
rejoicing in each denial—

Finding glory in their agony,
strength in the vengence of the Lord.

*Lawrence Rungren*

## Cliff Diver

Strung between rock, oak, and water,
at a bend where the St. Croix
digs deep into the earth,
a diver is perched
on a catwalk of granite
some forty feet in the air.
He watches the tightly scalloped waves,
the sunlight dancing like water striders,
and in the thin air,
sees himself
slipping tumbling
breaking apart
on the narrow peaks below.

But the oak and aspen
put straight these watery thoughts.
In them he sees perfect, unknotted limbs,
a concentration the wind cannot nettle.
He remembers that other dives have taught
only a good execution will save him.
So he plants the balls of his feet
into the rock
measures his breath
flexes calves,
and in the instant the leaves still,
hinges himself into a spring, and then,

miraculously sprung and open,
parts the air with his hands,
flying headlong into the mystery
of air, water,
his own equipoise
carving a long shaft of himself
down through the air, the water,
into a world clenched in his lungs,
sustaining only himself.

His lungs, large as wings,
buoy him
in the long crawl back to air and sun.
His head bobs up
like a piece of cork
as he sucks in fresh life
and grins a smile of small bones
at the oaks, the rock ledge,
the water, and his own bodily grace,
all curving sweetly together
in the instant between rock and water.

*David W. Ullrich*

# Pitching With The Yeast

**By Helen Block**

"Half a mile to start, increase a bit each day, up to perhaps two or three. It will be very therapeutic, Ruth. You'll see." He is right, I suppose. I am up to more than two miles now, and I am able to return, following the narrow shaded driveway that winds down to the lake, without the pang, the remembrance of Robert's face, relaxed, anticipating, the never failing, "Here we are," as he slowed for the sharp turn. This country road I walk each day is frequented by teen-agers, especially on weekends. Sun-winked bottles lie in the tall grass. I never pass a discarded glass bottle without mentally testing its heft and strength and the diameter of its mouth. Despite the proliferation of plastic liters, glass bottles are not at all rare. I am too old for either plastic or metric.

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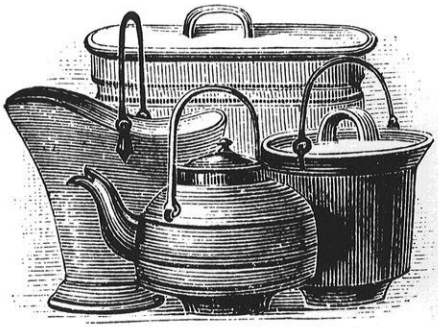

Garth was pulling the wagon and I was balancing the wooden bushel basket, filled with dirty bottles, when we came to the top of our hill and saw the car parked by the house.

"Who's that?" asked Garth, stopping to catch his breath.

"Don't know," I said. "Nobody we know's got a car like that." It was shiny green with a black top and yellow spoke wheels. I could tell it was a new '27 Chrysler, first glance. We didn't own a car but one of our games was sitting on the porch steps, seeing who could first name the cars kicking up dust along our road. "Come on."

We bumped the wagon along the downhill ruts and pulled it off the road, through the ditch and up behind the lilac bushes, where we left it. Billy and Cassie were playing in the sandbox by the woodshed. "Who's here?" I asked them, not expecting a sensible answer from a five-year-old or a three-year-old.

"A man," said Billy, toeing out a road for his woodchip cars in the sand.

Cassie patted a lopsided mudpie. "Man came," she said importantly. "He's inside."

Garth and I sat down on the edge of the sandbox and kicked off our last year's shoes, battered, too small, and now cut out at the toes to accommodate our growing feet. We scuffed away the dust and gravel in the cool grass. Garth preferred barefoot but Mama made us wear shoes when we went to the dump. I was terribly thirsty, but I wouldn't go in the house with that stranger there. It was half a mile down the road and another quarter mile through a field the back way to the town dump, and the summer sun was already hot at ten o'clock. Garth and I made our trips early before anyone else was apt to be there. I hated for someone to see us poking through the trash. If a car came up the regular dump road I'd make Garth hide behind the scrub-oak bushes with me until they left.

Garth was circling the Chrysler, looking in the windows, sliding his fingers over the shiny fenders, wiping dust off the fancy hood ornament, when we heard the kitchen screen open, and a man's voice. "You think over what I said, now, Mrs. Ekberg." Whatever Mama replied, I couldn't hear, but Garth jumped away from the car and popped around behind the shed. All we saw was a white shirt and dark pants and a Panama hat get into the car. It started up without being cranked, turned out of the yard, and headed towards town.

Mama came out. "Ruthie, Garth." We came around from the back of the shed. "Where's the wagon?"

"Behind the lilacs," said Garth.

"He see it?" Mama nodded her head toward the departing car.

"No, mam," I said.

Mama pushed a strand of hair up under the dust cap she always wore mornings before she had time to brush out and twist up a fresh crown of braids across the top of her head. "Find much?"

"Pretty good," said Garth, and we scooted over and pulled the wagon up to the house. Cassie and Billy came to see, too. Mostly the basket held high-shouldered vinegar bottles or flat-faceted catsup bottles, and once in a while a thick pop bottle or brown beer bottle, but not often because those were worth money. Garth would sometimes pick up thin little bottles, but I'd make him throw them back.

Mama's face held a little half, sideways smile, as much a smile as she ever had anymore. "We'll all have a cone next time we get to town." Mama didn't make promises she couldn't keep. Cassie, in her faded hand-me-down and Billy in his patched bib overalls, grinned at us, and then we helped carry the basket of bottles into the kitchen.

Mama said, "Garth, you go out now and weed that row of beets and then you can play." Garth scowled. He hated weeding, but he lifted the lid of the cookie tin, took one, and headed out to the garden behind the chicken coop. Mama was hulling the strawberries we'd picked last night, getting ready to make jam.

I poured myself a drink from the sink pump and then ran water into a basin, washing the dump smell off my hands with a bar of yellow lye soap. "Who was that man?"

Mama didn't look up. "Nathan Johnson."

"What'd he want?"

"Just nosing around."

I felt a small dart of fear. "What'd he say?"

Mama reached over and handed me a specially big, specially ripe berry. "Don't worry about it, Ruthie."

"Mama, I got a right to know, don't I?"

But her head was bent over the pan of berries and I knew she wasn't going to talk about it any more.

"Do something with your hands. Make something to give away, to take to a friend. Get outside yourself." As I come into the quiet house, I see that the loaves are bulging under the towel, and I turn on the oven to preheat it. Earlier this morning the mindless, methodical slap-knead-fold had transformed a sticky glob of dough into a smooth satiny mound and then into round loaves. Now I score the surface of each loaf, and the thin skin parts in naked gashes. The red light winks off and I slide the risen loaves into the oven. Soon the kitchen is filled with a warm, yeasty smell.

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On the nights after Uncle Karl drove up from Chippewa Falls for supper, his Model T chugging and sputtering, Mama and I got to work. Uncle Karl was the only one of Mama's family we ever saw. For a long time, I didn't understand, but finally Mama told me that when she married Daddy outside the church, she was disowned. How could anyone disown Mama? But her folks were German Catholics, Mama said, and they're the worst kind, more stubborn than Irish or Italian, or even the Poles. But Uncle Karl didn't disown Mama. He brought us black licorice whips, and the cans of Blue Ribbon extract, and he had supper and played ball with us. Then, before dark, he got back in the Model T and drove home to the farm, and the grandpa and grandma we never saw didn't know where he'd been.

So the next night when Garth and Cassie and Billy were upstairs asleep, Mama got out her kettles. She made up the sugar syrup in one kettle while I started the water boiling with a little salt in the big kettle to make the wort. Mama measured out the hops, and we let it all boil for a while. Then I held the big sieve while Mama strained out the sodden hops. We added the syrup and the malt Uncle Karl had brought and boiled it some longer. While it cooled, Mama would send me down to the cellar to bring up a cool bottle of her homemade root beer, and we'd pour it out fizzing into glasses. Then we'd sit drinking it, while the June bugs slammed themselves against the screendoor.

After it cooled, we poured the wort into a big blue gray crock in the pantry, and Mama got her yeast starter up from the cellar shelf where it kept itself alive, and she stirred it into the crock. She called it pitching with the yeast. Nothing would happen until you did that. Then we'd slide the big crock under the gingham skirt that hung down from a shelf in the pantry, and it would sit there working away for a week or more until Mama thought it was right.

"Ruth, I'm your doctor, but I'm also your friend. You aren't the first woman devastated by this loss. Go up to the lake. Open the cottage again. Have the kids come up." Jenny is driving up this weekend. At first I tell her, no, I'm not good company. But she insists. Some things skip a generation. Jenny has my mother's pale cream skin and thick copper-penny hair. Garth and Billy and Cassie and I were all rosy-cheeked towheads, the blond first darkening to ash and then to brown. When Jenny was a teen-ager, imitating her generation's flower children, her hair hung down her back, but not fashionably lank and flat. She probably even tried to iron it. It was like my mother's hair, when she used to undo her braids and let the deep waves hang down around her shoulders. Jenny's hair is short now, thick and artificially lightened to strawberry blond. It takes very well to the chic cuts favored by successful career women. I like to watch her blow it dry.

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Mama seemed old-fashioned, even to us. Most of the ladies in town, and all but the oldest and grayest of our school teachers had bobbed their hair, but Mama wouldn't. She wouldn't shorten her dresses, and she never wore lipstick or rouge like other ladies. Maybe it was because of Daddy. Sometimes I would tell Garth and Billy and Cassie how Daddy used to come home from work, all dusty and smelling of grain from the mill, and he'd grab us up and spin us around and we'd all giggle. And then he'd come up behind Mama and spin her around, too, and call her his little fraulein. "Haus frau, you mean," Mama would say, but she'd laugh, too. And Daddy would wash up and we'd all sit down around the kitchen table with the kerosene lamp in wintertime ruddying our faces and tossing shadows on the kitchen walls, and eat Mama's kraut and pork hocks, or chicken soup with big fat noodles. Garth and Billy and Cassie wanted to hear about it, but they would be mad, too, because they couldn't remember, and especially not Cassie because she wasn't even born then.

Once, at the Lutheran Sunday School, in the basement of the white frame church, two bigger girls in the next cluster of chairs, circled around their teacher, looked over at me and whispered and said my mother's name, loud enough to hear. Their teacher shushed them. I was ashamed, but I didn't know why, and I wouldn't ask Mama.

When it was the right time, two of Daddy's old friends from the mill would come over and help Mama with the bottle capping, late, after we had all gone to bed. I could hear them talking through the floor register, and when they were done, Mama would make them coffee and give them her thick, spicy cinnamon rolls, warmed on the back of the stove. Their cars would be parked in our yard until past midnight sometimes, and I thought the whispers in church were connected to that. When they left, they carried away boxes of full bottles from the basement, and in the morning there would always be some empties on the back porch. The next day, we would all walk a mile and a half into town to buy groceries, and sometimes a treat, toting the sacks home in our old red Flyer.

"It's time to take charge. You have always let Robert do everything. Your children can't take his place and they won't. It's time to manage your own life, Ruth." The pile of bills is to my left, the checkbook and a thin black calculator to my right. The round gold desk calendar says it is the 15th, and the bills must be paid. There will always be enough money. Robert made sure of that. From the first day I met him, only twentyfive years old but already solid and steady, he was my security. It was a kind of miracle—me, the green country girl behind the hosiery counter in a Milwaukee

store, Robert already a department manager. What incredible luck that he liked me, then loved me, and that I loved him. His family was so substantial, so proper, so kind to me. I didn't want to disappoint any of them, so neither Robert, nor his family, nor our children ever heard the truth about the poverty of my childhood or the mother who never moved forward in fashion and lived out her life in that little frame house with the woodshed and the chicken coop and the vegetable garden. The first bill on the pile is from the County Protection Services, the people who watch the cottage while I'm away. Three months' service—$100. Mama could have kept us all for five months on $100. And she didn't need protective services.

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In the long summer evening it was still light at nine o'clock and we were all supposed to be asleep. I was just dozing off when I heard car doors slam in the yard. Then, a knocking at the kitchen door, men's voices and someone in the kitchen. I slipped out of bed and crept over to the floor register. Slowly I pushed the knob that opened the flaps so I could look down into the kitchen. By then, they were sitting at the table.

I could see Mama's back and the legs of one of the two men. His pants were dark blue, with a shiny stripe, a uniform. I hardly breathed.

"Now, Mrs. Ekberg," said one thin, accusing voice, "I did warn you some time ago about what I heard."

"Yes, Mr. Johnson, you did." said Mama.

"Well, I can tell you right now, we got proof of what you're doing." Mama didn't answer him, so he went on. "This here is Fred Henry from the county sheriff's office."

"Are you here to arrest me, Mr. Henry?" asked Mama in a low, soft voice.

"Well, now," said the other man, "I don't know, but from what I hear it looks like we may just have . . ." Mama had pushed her chair back and was standing up. I could see her full now, her hands gripping the back of her chair.

"This is all you got to do?" Mama's voice was tight and beginning to get louder. I worried that she'd wake up the other kids. "Well, Mr. Henry, you just go ahead and arrest me. And then you tell me who is going to take care of those four children up there." Her hand jabbed towards the ceiling. "You going to put them in jail, too, or are you going to take them to the county orphanage? Because they got no other place to go. You want the taxpayers supporting them while their Mama's in jail? Is that what you want?"

Mr. Johnson started to say something, but Mama wouldn't stop. "I'm going to tell you two something," she said. "My husband died in a mill accident on Christmas Eve four years ago and left me with three children, one on the way, and forty-seven chickens. And that's all."

She paced two or three steps and ran her hands over her shiny crown of hair. "The settlement from the mill paid for this house, and that's everything we've got. I'm supporting my children the only way I know how, and what I'm doing doesn't hurt anybody. My family's made good beer ever since I can remember and just because some do-gooders got a constitutional amendment passed in this country while most of the men were away fighting a war, that doesn't make beer any worse or any better than it was ten years ago." She paused. Neither man said anything. Blue trousers shifted his feet nervously. "If you want to enforce prohibition, why don't you stop the trucks hauling whiskey between Canada and Chicago, and going right through this town, like everybody knows? And stop picking on a widow who makes a little home brew to sell."

I had been holding my breath so long, I thought I'd explode, and just then my elbow hit the register knob and it clattered. Mama looked up. "Ruthie, you get to bed." I slid the register shut and crawled back to my bed, shivering in the warm night.

The voices downstairs became very low, and after a while the doors slammed again and the car drove away. Mama didn't come upstairs and I was afraid to go down. I lay for a long time trembling as the darkness came, and finally I fell asleep.

Next morning Mama didn't look at me, and she didn't say anything. Nathan Johnson and Fred Henry never came back and Mama went on making home brew until prohibition ended, and then when times got better, she got a job cooking in the grade school cafeteria.

"Eighteen months is long enough to grieve, Ruth. I think you're a tough lady, but no one's ever given you a chance to prove it. Don't waste the rest of your years." It is late afternoon and I am restless. Perhaps I can make that three miles yet today. I have paid the bills, vacuumed and dusted the cottage, getting ready for Jenny tomorrow. I decide to take a loaf of the fresh bread to my long-time neighbor, whose concerns I have too often brushed away these past months. She is pleased, and I am glad I brought it. As I turn back into my tree-shaded driveway, I see a dark brown bottle that has rolled just to the edge of the grassy shoulder. Its label is foreign, German. A high class bottle to be tossed along a country road. Teen-agers must be more affluent these days. I pick it up. It is faintly warm from the sun and smooth in my hands. I carry it with me back to the house. I do not remove the label. Tomorrow I will put wild daisies in the bottle and set it on the table where it will catch the lake's reflected light. Jenny and I will eat lunch together there. I wish I had told Robert the truth about my mother. Tomorrow I will tell Jenny.■

## A View of Fuji From the Foreigners' Cemetery

These tombs tent little
to this rocky knob overlooking
Yokohama Bay, and missing
are the oranges and incense

The Japanese gift their dead.
A woman-sized daphne shakes its sweet
campaniles in the sutured breeze,
the grass patchy as an old man's

Chest: even our sneakered footsteps seem
to hurt the soil.
And when they tire of this accomomdation
do the foreign dead

Slip into uniforms of light
and wing out past the half-crook
of Yokohama to hitch rides with freighters
bound for wherever was home

Before death in Japan?
After days of absence, Mt. Fuji
tears through the coromandel smog
of August, a triumphant Kabuki entrance

The fearsome goddess oddly corroded,
the shinto *kami* complete with a sun
dying in the folds of her gilt kimono
the final volleys of light seeming

To lift above the ships, cranes, crosses, angels,
stars-of-david a bold circumflex,
a lacquered caret to indicate something
missing in the syntax of clouds

As if burial away from home is a fractured
statement, the exile's ellipsis;
and how this sacred volcano evokes
a reluctance, a shudder.

*Credo James Enriquez*

## Sunday Afternoon Live

March 7, 1982 from the
Elvehjem in Madison, Wisconsin

Here.

He's here
after having worn
rubbers on running shoes

riding
his bicycle in
in winter weather

in time
to hear the first
concert correction

live
that it's all one piece
made of five fine
Renaissance dances
(just an error in the printing)
followed by

four movements in
the final piece
before intermission—imagine

clapping not on time
this live and all
today

on the radio.

Here
they save Bach

toccatas and fugues
almost
to last

ending in
Paul Bunyan's
Suite
and the bicycle rider

leaving

before the French Canadian Axe Dance
is over
and the finale

begins.

*C X Dillhunt*

Photo by Luther G. Goldman. Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife

# The Great Blues

By J. M. Bartley © 1985

For two winged forms slowly descending from thick wet clouds, the landscape was again familiar. They were tired from their long journey, and alone in the sky against the cold drizzle that whipped against their bodies like pinpricks. To a lone observer on the ground, they were barely visible in the heavy mist; their gray and purple primaries created a camouflage effect against the low clouds.

It took a keen pair of eyes to spot Daush while he was still a distant speck against droplets of rain. Those same eyes watched his approach, saw him bank and turn, more sailing on currents of air than flying, then rear back with legs extended forward, skimming over still black water onto the muddy shore. The eyes squinted, as if to shorten the distance between them. Water sprayed off Dausch's wings and back; feathers whipped the air to stop his forward motion. A few moments later Ammeti, his mate, landed silently next to him. They had arrived.

The figure crouched even lower in the underbrush to avoid being seen. Every day for two weeks, Rainer had walked west from his bayshore home to the end of the dirt road, then over soft, water-logged ground to the wooded thicket. Here, on the lonely shoreline of Point Au Sable, surrounded by once-fertile farmland and the waters of Green Bay, with the Tower Drive Arch and papermill smokestacks as skyline, Rainer had stood and watched and waited, knowing they would come.

Rainer and Martha had named the two great blues that first year, Daush after their Irish setter that tempted fate by ignoring cars on the Nicolet shoreroad, and Ammeti from Rainer's rough pronunciation of the French word for affection and friendship.

Every year Daush brought Ammeti back to Point au Sable on the eastern shore of the lower bay of Green Bay. It seemed fitting to Rainer that they had selected this remote spot. An abandoned field, formerly rich farmland, now idle, overgrown and inundated by the

searching waters, provided a natural barrier from the shoreroad and the houses. Elsewhere, a maze of marsh and inlets, meandering creeks and gullies provided adequate shallows for hunting.

From this private stretch of sand beach, surrounded on either side by rocks and dense underbrush, the point continued outward for a hundred yards—its spine submerged and deadly. Rainer surmised the unique haven of Point au Sable—Point of Sand—had allowed the great blues to overcome their urge to move northward into Canada. Here they were protected, secluded, safe. Rainer had never had reason to think otherwise.

Several days passed before Rainer observed Daush dipping and clucking in his elaborate dance of hops and jumps, twirls and swirls, until Ammeti finally took notice. Rainer spied bright color changes in Daush's bill, eye region, legs, and feet. For them it was not sexual desire nor the ritual of mating—Dausch and Ammeti felt no excitement and knew no purpose. It was, Rainer reflected from his hiding place, the inexplainable result of instinct—unfathomable, untaught ability, pure purpose, denied only to man.

Rainer watched Dausch collect twigs and sticks, which he deftly placed on a high bed of branches in a dead hardwood tree. Dausch worked methodically, selecting various lengths and thicknesses, lifting and dropping them, then nudging them into place with his long bill. Finally, Dausch stepped gingerly on the platform to test it.

Meanwhile Ammeti was searching the shallows for food. She seemed to revel in the sport of hunting like a true enthusiast. Often she would dash through the water in a wild, high-stepping dance, extending and flicking her wings. Seeing this, Rainer would wonder at her ingenuity in flushing victims into open water. This—or was it simply her way of releasing energy accumulated from hours of standing motionless? Sometimes her performance was closer to that of a ballerina as she delicately disturbed clumps of aquatic vegetation with her feet.

Suddenly Daush abandoned his nestbuilding and with great commmotion charged, taking giant, ungainly leaps as his wings beat furiously to get him airborn. His voice was now loud and throaty, as if frightened, or intent on attracting attention. Rainer's mind raced for an explanation. A noise? An animal? Had Daush become aware of his presence?

It was Daush who provided the answer. He climbed and swooped, banked and dived over Ammeti in a series of spectacular aerial displays. After some twenty minutes, he landed on the shoreline, raised his bill straight up, and marched toward Ammeti in a swaying motion. This was the signal that Ammeti seemed to find irresistible. Rainer watched as she used her long bill as a brush to paint herself with mud. Then she abandoned her stance in the water and flew up onto the nesting platform.

After waiting two weeks before returning to the nest, Rainer was disappointed to see both Daush and Ammeti feeding some distance away. Rainer seized the opportunity to climb carefully up to the nest. At first it looked abandoned, but closer examination revealed two buffy white eggs in a special bed of powder down.

In his mind—before he could stop it—Rainer saw Martha examining last year's nest, carefully so as not to disturb it, then taking out the notepad she always carried. He remembered her saying that herons have patches of feathers whose tips disintegrate to form this powder down, which is then used to keep slime from forming on their bodies. Ammeti had applied it to the nest as a cushion. From her tuft of beige and cream breast feathers, she had plucked her down and laid it over the eggs as a substitute for her own body, thus giving herself and Daush a temporary reprieve. Rainer swung down from the tree to watch Daush and Ammeti together on the shore.

The bright morning sun glistened off the still water, intensifying the rich hues of blue, black, purple, gray, and white in their feathers. As they turned, stepped, and darted, much as a robin does searching for worms, the sun caught their golden eyes and Daush's contrasting patch of bare skin that easily identified him as a male.

Suddenly Ammeti's daggerlike, dark-orange bill darted forward with amazing quickness, as if her slender gray neck held a coiled spring. A small fish wiggled helplessly in her grasp. She ate it immediately with a quick upward toss of her head, but Rainer had often seen her carry larger fish back to shore and slap them repeatedly against a rock or branch before eating them.

Rainer smiled at his acquired knowledge and interest. A year ago he felt otherwise. Those mornings he would wake up to find Martha gone, her note on the table: "Gone birding, back in an hour." He had gradually learned to make his own breakfast rather than wait. Given birds and binoculars, Martha lost all sense of time. And driving down the highway, Rainer had learned to steel himself against her sudden outbursts. "Rainer, pull over! Hurry!" Instantly she was out of the car, binoculars in hand. Rainer gradually learned never to drive with Martha according to a timetable, and resorted to keeping a Louis L'Amour novel in the glovebox.

Martha was gone now. It had been ten months since that morning Rainer awoke next to her warm body, her face peaceful, almost smiling. He had raised her hand to his mouth and kissed it, as he always did to waken her. Instantly he knew. The world was quiet and far away that morning. Hours passed, as Rainer held her hand pressed against his face, not wanting to let go, his face buried in the pillow to muffle his animal cries. Since that night Rainer has helplessly relived over and over their last words and embrace.

**What sense do herons have of family? What do they share in their delicate partnership?**

Dimly, Rainer realized he now feared life as well as cherished it. Again he pushed back the flood of memories as he watched Daush and Ammeti in the water. What sense do they have, Rainer wondered, of family and togetherness, of needing and depending on each other? Do they, likewise, feel the call of destiny, of life's passing in each and every day? What do they share and communicate to each other in their delicate partnership?

He watched them hunt without sense of time or hurry, with an intense purpose and natural skill. Time for them, Rainer reasoned, is as shapeless and ever-changing as their reflection on the water's surface. He decided to write about today in Martha's notebook.

A passing pleasure boat out near the shipping channel startled Daush and Ammeti, causing them to abandon quickly their quest for food and move inland. From all such threats or encroachment they had but this single defense—retreat. Rainer deftly moved away from the nest area and picked his way back to firm ground, then along his wayward route to the dirt road and back home.

Many times during the next several weeks Rainer walked along the rise above the bay, but would not allow himself to get any closer. He knew the herons would hatch after thirty days of incubation, and would then grow rapidly—an inch a day, Martha had said. But he would not allow the risk of disturbing or, worse, intervening.

Finally, on Father's Day, Rainer spotted Ammeti hunting along the inner marsh. Behind her were two small, awkward forms stepping and poking about. "Good show!" he said aloud.

Rainer began spending more and more time at the point, watching Daush, Ammeti, and the two young ones. He took Martha's small wrinkled notebook with him and recorded his observations each day as she had done. He had become protective and possessive of Daush and his family, and even fancied they had accepted his presence, allowing him to approach and sit quietly, within spitting distance he had written in the journal.

Rainer returned to his brick ranch style home on Grove Road, to his manicured lawn and half-dozen birdfeeders, to his spotless kitchen and ceiling-to-floor picture windows that faced the bay—and to his aloneness. As an adult, he had never known being this alone. Not just being without Martha, but thinking and feeling alone, sharing nothing, keeping inside his moods of happiness and depression. There was no one to listen, to admire, to care.

He tried to identify the feeling as he stood on the soft white carpet in his socks, watching as a freighter crossed the white entrance light and moved silently against the horizon toward Green Bay. He felt it as a scream inside him crying out for relief. With each day it became less difficult and more final. Time, which is supposed to heal all wounds, was slowly inflicting a few.

Stop it! Rainer admonished. Martha had always considered living in the past a pointless indulgence and self-pity its worst manifestation. You've managed quite well, he told himself. You've proven that you're capable, a survivor, and you've even discovered something of yourself in the process, something that feels good and right. There are still happy, magical times—times hard won and long in coming. But you can't do it all by yourself without losing some of yourself in the balance.

Rainer had already turned and moved toward the yellow phone on the kitchen wall before he allowed the thought, and as he punched the buttons and imagined the voice that would answer, he knew this, too, felt right.

The next morning Rainer was up before the birds began their noisy squabbling for position at his feeders. He was just sliding large mounds of wheat dough into the oven when the sound of a car turning onto his driveway interrupted his humming.

"Rainer? I was so glad you called. And here I am!"

"So you are," Rainer said simply, but with a hint of chiding. "Come in, Jackie. Gee you look good. Uh—I've got bread baking and fresh coffee brewing—or have you eaten?"

"You know I haven't! It's all I could do to make it up at this ungodly hour, but I couldn't resist your invitation—even though it wasn't for dinner."

Rainer smiled at their standing joke—or had it become more than a joke? He knew Jackie liked him, and he liked her. Why couldn't it be that simple? She knew better than to push, knowing that for Rainer a relationship was still somehow wrong. He was about to mumble an apology, but thought better of it.

Jackie sensed a change of mood. "So . . . a resident family of great blue herons that you've all but adopted. And you say they've returned year after year?"

"Yep." Again his eyes twinkled. Jackie removed her sleeveless jacket and walked into the living room. Rainer automatically eyed her shoes on the white carpet, but said nothing. They stood at the window, watching a black-capped chickadee furtively snatch a sunflower seed and fly away.

Ranier first met Jackie at the wildlife sanctuary. They were virtual neighbors, they discovered. Since then,

they had enjoyed many times together on bird counts, Audubon trips, and explorations of the habitat along the bay and throughout the Door County peninsula. Rainer had grown to feel comfortable with Jackie, even happy in her presence, at a time when he needed someone but refused to admit it, even to himself.

Suddenly Jackie turned, remembering. "Come on, Rainer, you know I'm dying for more information. How'd you find them? And how'd you ever keep track of them? Are you sure they're the same pair? Maybe they just—"

Rainer laughed aloud and gave Jackie a quick hug. He did enjoy her childlike enthusiasm. "All in good time. First we eat, then we'll have to skadaddle. The sun's almost up." Suddenly he heard a sound that made him forget about the bread and eating and her questions. Instantly Rainer felt rage—and fear. The sounds were coming from the point. Two. Three. The firing of shotguns.

Rainer grabbed his knotted walking stick and was out the door before Jackie could ask. She grabbed her jacket and went running after him.

"Rainer, what are you going to do? Rainer, wait up! Rainer, will you just slow down and think a minute? Damn it, Rainer!"

Jackie caught up with him at the end of the dirt road. Rainer was winded and slowed to a walk, but even so he went crashing through the underbrush, and again Jackie was left behind. His fury had propelled him this far; now Rainer's mind cleared. He slowed and moved forward more cautiously. They were probably duck hunters, he reasoned. They'd have to be half blind to mistake a great blue's larger size, trailing feet, and distinctive s-shaped neck for a duck.

All the same, they've got no business hunting here. A good hunter would know better. A good hunter, he repeated to himself. Damn! It had been a long time since he had felt such rage. Twigs lashed out against his face and hands. His feet were soaked. He had not thought to follow his customary route.

This time Rainer did not stop in one of his usual hiding places, but forged ahead to the shoreline. The nesting platform was empty. He made a quick search of the sand and water and rocks and underbrush. Nothing. He scanned the sky. Nothing. He splashed westward around the point to their favorite feeding area—and stopped.

Moving rhythmically with the undulation of a current of waves, turning over and over as the water alternately lifted it onto the rocks, then pulled it down into the gentle backwash, was the limp body of Ammeti.

Rainer stood in the water, eyes closed, head down, leaning on his walking stick, as a lump grew in his throat. He would not allow the tears nor the rage to show.

Jackie walked out to him and put her arm around his waist. Then she noticed movement on the rise.

"Rainer! Look." She pointed to where two boys were scampering over the hill. One held a rifle. The other carried a small, lifeless body, wings open, head hanging downward. A drake. They disappeared over the rise.

Rainer looked again at the formless body of feathers floating in the water. "Damn fools," he cursed. "Probably shot her just for sport."

Jackie walked over and carefully picked up Ammeti by the legs and neck. "She deserves better than this," Jackie said in answer to Rainer's look. As they walked back around the point, they spotted Ammeti's brood farther down the shore. There was no sign of Daush.

"We've got to do something. They're too young to make it." Rainer's voice was firm, but his eyes were pleading.

"There's nothing we can do, Rainer. You know better than to intervene. They're unhurt and healthy. They have a good chance, especially if the male returns. The best thing we can do is leave."

The next morning Rainer left early to check on the young ones and to look for Daush. He welcomed the crisp, fragrant morning air; the house still smelled of burned bread. This time he kept to his usual path and approached as silently as possible.

The platform was undisturbed and empty, but out on the water's edge were two tiny herons, standing ever so still in the rippling shadow of a familiar form. Daush had returned.

Relieved, Rainer watched as Daush stood motionless. Suddenly his long bill darted forward faster than Rainer's eyes could record. It seemed to Rainer that the two young ones also struck out at the water in exact mimicry. Then Daush raised his neck to its full height and scanned the shoreline. Even at this distance, Rainer could see the yellow glint in the eye as Daush searched the water's surface, the trees and underbrush, and the sky overhead. Every few seconds Daush would freeze, alert for any sign of danger.

Rainer had not noticed this behavior before. Ruefully, he realized Daush would now forever be on his guard, knowing only that something he had not seen—and had heard only when it was too late—had taken Ammeti from him. Daush had learned to fear man as his enemy.

Slowly Rainer backed away from his hiding place and returned to his footpath. He knew Daush would no longer permit his presence. The years Rainer had spent fostering their tenuous bond, their sense of acceptance and trust, had been destroyed in a single instant.

Reaching the rise, Rainer turned to look one last time. It seemed to him at that moment Daush also raised his head, slowly, majestically, almost triumphantly, as if to affirm all that had happened and to accept what must be.

That evening, Rainer slid the Windsor knot of his Beau Brummell tie up to the top button of his oxford shirt. He was taking Jackie out to dinner. ■

## Responsibility

In a stubbly field where corn grows no more
a just-blooming thistle spices steaming air
and a brown, white-tailed rabbit hunches, waits.
It is the night of summer solstice. The ears of
the rabbit twitch. At the edge of the rutted field
the Oconomowoc River runs, and above it runs
a gauzy river of fog, shredded here, there
by sheathed cattails, flecked by firefly light.
A diving bat signals and the rabbit, ceremoniously
tilts back its head to stare up at the dim stars
and to pin each, one last time, to its place
on the terrible blue-black sky. If ever
for an instant, the rabbit, now, should blink
the caught stars will run down the million walls
of the slippery sky, streaming at first like
incandescent tears, each tracing a separate path,
then joining, intersecting, crosshatching paths
of others until the night grows doubly, triply
bright and the starpaths become a woven sheet
of sliding light and the river beneath the fog
begins to hiss. Some thing moves now, tick,
on the riverbank; and the dome of the white moon
cracks the horizon line. The rabbit's head jerks
down, and everything above begins to fall apart.

*Robert Hillebrand*

## All the Way From BCSP to P-ville

driving at 4 am after two days of no sleep you pop
peanut m & m's and tank coffee sing funk and tell
Hopi tales, car lights ahead are not car lights at all
but a static picasso pattern of light and dark
unregistered by the brain as meaningful, and
running off the road seems a convenient way to rest,
curled roadside in a yellow sleeping bag in the damp
chill of mid-April you almost regret the stop
think you could have gone on forever your will as hard
as the cement under your tires and stretching
transcontinental, but the body remembers sleep
and remembering sleeps

*Mary Dalles*

**We pride ourselves on being more intelligent than the average ice fisherman, but we spend the morning on ice with the temperature well below zero and a northeast wind blowing.**

# Mad Men and Scandanavians

**By Ronald Harshman**

I have heard that in tropical climates "mad dogs and Englishmen go out in the midday sun." I am convinced that in northern climates mad men and Scandanavians go out on the early morning ice.

"Do you want to go fishing in the morning?" Erik asks at lunch. "Lars and I are going to Tuverson's. What time should I pick you up?"

I haven't prepared an excuse, and I risk offending Erik if I say no. "O.K. What time do you want to pick me up?"

"We've got to pick up Lars. I'll be by at seven. Bring a lunch." Erik has already made the arrangements.

Erik arrives a little past seven and apologizes for being late. We have all the equipment for a day on the ice: an ice auger, several tip-ups, five jigging poles, a minnow bucket, and two dippers. We are dressed for the cold: long underwear, flannel shirts, sweaters, down vests, coats, two pairs of heavy wool socks, Sorrels with wool liners, chopper mittens, and stocking hats. We each have a thermos of coffee. Erik asks me to pour him some as we drive out of town.

We listen to "Saturday Morning by Request" on Wisconsin Public Radio and talk university politics as we drive the twenty miles to pick up Lars. Erik, Lars, and I all work at the university. We pride ourselves on being a step above the average ice fisherman in intellect, but we are going to spend the morning on the ice when the temperature is well below zero and a northeast wind is blowing.

Tuverson's is a small resort on a flowage near Gordon in northern Wisconsin. In the summer the owners rent cabins and boats to tourists and run a small lakeshore tavern. In the winter the owners charge ice fishermen one dollar per car to use their road to drive onto the ice. They don't collect the money, you shove it through a mail slot in the office door.

After we pay, we survey the ice flowage. There are probably two dozen cold people fishing on the ice. Some are crouched on stools by open holes with their backs hunched against the wind. Some are watching tip-ups through the frosted windows of pick-up trucks. Some are fishing inside crude ice-fishing houses.

In winter, lakes in northern Wisconsin resemble Depression shanty towns. Every lake has a small community of shacks each approximately four feet wide, eight feet long, and six feet high. The shacks are built from any available material: plywood, wafer board, thin sheets of metal, sheets of plastic supported by firring strips, canvas. They are built on wooden runners that raise them above the ice and keep them from freezing fast. Some are heated with small stoves and the acrid smell of burning wood fills the air on the lakes. Mixed breed dogs run among the houses. Frozen fish carcasses lie alongside abandoned fishing holes.

The men who populate these towns look like the homeless men in television documentaries. They wear

dark wool trousers discarded from other uses. Their bulky coats fit poorly and are either the mixture of greens, blacks, and browns used for army camouflage or the bright orange used to distinguish deer hunters from deer. Most are torn and dirty.

The men wear calf-length boots with rubber bottoms, leather uppers, and yellow laces. Their heavy pants legs are half tucked into their boots. On their heads they wear dirty wool stocking caps or cloth hats with short brims and ear flaps that are pulled tightly over their ears. Some have hoods on their coats, and these are pulled over their hats. The men look old, worn, defeated by the wind, as they hunch around the holes in the ice. Some sip from flasks filled with flavored brandy or Yukon Jack.

We pick an open spot, drive Erik's Volvo onto the ice, and park.

"You cut the holes and I'll put in the tip-ups," Erik directs. Erick is a big man, a teacher, and the father of two teenage sons. He is accustomed to giving directions.

"Where do you want the holes?" Lars asks.

"Start here." Erik points to a spot on the ice. "Then go on out."

Lars grabs the ice auger and we walk to where Erik is pointing.

"How's this look?" he asks.

"Looks good," I reply without much thought. One guess is as good as another when you are trying to decide where to place a hole in a frozen lake, I think. I want to get it done and find some shelter from the bitter wind.

Lars sticks the point of the auger into a patch of snow on the ice; we both grab hold facing one another and begin cranking the auger. An ice auger is like a giant brace and bit that bores a six-inch hole in the ice by being cranked round and round. Some people use gas-powered augers, but we crank by hand. It's somehow not sporting to use a power auger to drill holes to catch fish in winter.

We keep cranking and bending closer to the ice. Finally, we break through. Lars gives the auger several quick up and down thrusts and then jerks it out of the hole. Water and ice follow the auger out of the hole and the water bounces up and down. I grab a dipper and clean ice out of the hole while I push the shavings away so the tip-up will have a flat place to sit.

"Where should we put the next one?" Lars asks.

"Why don't you go on out that way." Erik points in a southeast direction with authority. He prides himself on being a great fish scout on the ice.

We walk past a half-dozen tip-ups already on the ice, find an open spot, and repeat the process of cutting a hole in the ice. We continue to drill holes as Erik directs until we have spots for all six of our tip-ups. While Erik puts tip-ups in the holes, we drill three more holes, about eight feet apart, for jigging.

Tip-ups come in two forms, the common and the deluxe. The common tip-up is three pieces of wood bolted together in the middle. Two of the pieces fold open to form an X, and the third piece folds up to form an upright flag pole. The flag pole is bisected by the X so that one half can be suspended below the ice and hold the reel of fishing line, and the other half can stand upright to hold the flag. The flag pole supports a thin band of spring metal to which a red flag is fastened. The band of metal is bent over and hooked to the side of the stick by a rod that also attaches to the reel of line below the ice. When a fish grabs the bait, usually a large sucker or shiner minnow, and pulls, the reel turns moving the rod and releasing the band of spring metal. The metal springs up and the flag flaps in the wind. At this time it is the custom for the first person to see the flag to yell "flag!" as loud as he can. The proprietor of the tip-up then runs to the hole, throws off his gloves or mittens, pulls the tip-up from the hole, graps the line, and attempts to set the hook. If the fisherman is lucky, he will pull a large northern pike or, in some lakes, a walleye out of the hole.

The deluxe tip-up is called the Arctic Fisherman. It is a flat piece of wood with a metal mechanism holding a reel mounted in the middle. For fishing, the metal mechanism rotates so that the half holding the fishing reel and hook can be dropped into a hole in the ice, and the half holding the flag sticks above the ice. The fishing reel rotates on lubricated ball bearings that will not freeze and allow fish to pull line off easily when they take the bait. Thus, owners say, there is less chance of spooking fish and more chance of catching fish with an Arctic Fisherman.

After the tip-ups are in place, we begin jigging for blue gills. Jigging requires a very short pole, two or three feet in length, with a small reel attached to hold the line. A small sponge rubber bobber is threaded onto the line and held in place by a stick the size of a large round toothpick. A tiny lure, called a Swedish pimple, is tied to the end of the line and baited with a grub worm for blue gills or a small minnow for crappies. The bobber is pulled up the line until the distance between the bobber and the Swedish pimple equals the depth at which the ice fisherman guesses he will find fish. The pimple is dropped into a hole and allowed to sink until the bobber sits up. The ice fisherman then raises the bobber about six inches and lets it drop back into the water. This causes the bait to move up and down and is supposed to attract fish.

The process of jigging the bobber up and down is repeated continuously. Often the bait is given an extra jiggle by the pole shaking in the hands of a shivering fisherman. This morning my line is constantly jigging.

I'm not having any luck jigging so I begin to experiment. I lower my bobber to shorten the amount of line falling below the ice, drop the bait in the hole, and raise and lower the bobber slowly. Quickly my bobber darts under the water and then jumps back to the surface. I lift my line a few inches, let it drop back down, and then frantically jiggle it again. Once more my bobber starts down below the water, and I pull up slowly until I feel resistance, then give a quick jerk. I

feel the weight of a fish on the line and pull a five-inch blue gill, nearly as wide as it is long, from the hole.

I pull off my chopper mittens, grab the fish with one hand, pull the hook from its gullet with the other, and throw the fish on the ice. I put another grub worm on the small hook, drop the Swedish pimple into the hole, and quickly pull my mittens over my freezing hands.

Soon my bobber is dancing up and down. It sinks below the ice; I pull on the line and yank another small fish from the water.

"They're only four or five feet down," I yell. "They must be just below the ice."

I give my line another quick jerk, feel another fish on the line, and pull another blue gill from the hole. Just as I'm pulling out the hook, someone yells "flag!"

Erik is already running as fast as a big man can run in heavy Sorrels on ice. His run is more like a slow motion skip. With his large body, heavy coat, Sorrels, and stocking cap, he looks like a villain running from the Royal Canadian Mounties in a silent film. He is running toward a tip-up that is just in front of his Volvo. The flag is still bouncing up and down.

I return to my jigging hole, watch my bobber disappear again, and pull out another blue gill. Erik returns.

"Nothing there," he reports. "I don't know what happened. Must have been a little snake that just took the minnow and then let go."

Snake is the term ice fishermen use for small northern pike which have long slender bodies. Ice fishermen do not like them because they don't produce meat. They take minnows but don't put fish on the ice.

I catch another small blue gill.

"Atta boy, get'em while you got a hot hole," Erik shouts.

"Flag!" some shouts.

I'm ready this time. I drop my jigging pole and run toward the tip-ups, thankful for a chance to stop shivering. I spot the flag bouncing up and down, run to the hole, pull off my mittens, and reach for the tip-up. As I pull the tip-up from the hole, I notice that the reel is not turning. I grab the line and pull. The line comes out of the hole, and the minnow is still on the hook. I wrap the line around the reel, reset the flag, and put the tip-up back in the hole.

As I return to my jigging hole, Erik asks, "Anything there?"

"No, nothing. No sign of a fish. Not much line out. Must be a little snake cruising around. We'll get him next time."

Fish are always male to ice fishermen. It is not sporting to go out on the ice in January and pull momma fish out of the water before she can lay her eggs. However, most of the fish we have on the ice are females.

We continue jigging and running when an occasional flag goes up for the remainder of the morning. We stop at noon to eat lunch in the warmth of Erik's Volvo, then return to shiver by our holes. Lars doesn't say much, but continues to pile fish on the ice. I continue to catch small blue gills, although at times there is a long wait between fish. Erik is not having much luck. He finally catches a fish that is two inches long.

"Wow! Look at this," he shouts, as he pulls it out of the hole. "It really took skill to catch this one."

"Go tell your mom!" he tells the fish as he throws it back into his hole.

After Erik throws the baby back into the hole, the fish stop biting. We all jig in our holes for another twenty minutes, then Erik picks up the ice auger and drills another hole nearer to the shore. I move to Erik's abandoned hole, lengthen my line, and begin jigging. I catch one fish but no more. Erik is not having any luck at his new hole.

"You guys about ready to quit?" Erik asks. "Let's give 'em another half hour and if they don't start biting, we'll go home."

"Sounds good to me," I reply. I'm ready to go now, but I'll wait another thirty minutes. At least the end is in sight.

We quit at about 2:00 p.m. We have over fifty blue gills and five northern pike, each weighing three or four pounds, on the ice.

"We can each have a meal or two out of these," Lars states triumphantly, as we pack up fish, auger, tip-ups, and minnow buckets.

"Next time we'll set up the house." Erik is already planning the next trip. "Where do you think we should put it?"

"This looks like a good place to me." I don't see any sense in looking for another place when we have caught fish here. I'm freezing and don't want to stop to debate where we should place an ice fishing shack next week when I can be riding home in a warm car.

On the way home Erik and Lars discuss their plans for setting up their shack. They talk about the number of fish we caught at Tuverson's and compare them to fish caught on other frozen lakes. I do not join the discussion. I'm thinking of excuses for not going ice fishing the next weekend or the one after that or the one after that.

The next Friday Erik sits down with me at lunch and immediately asks, "Are we going fishing tomorrow? Lars and I are putting the house up at Tuverson's. Shall I pick you up at 6:30?"

I'm ready.

"I can't go, sorry. I've got to run my kids to ice skating lessons, two birthday parties in Duluth, and take them shopping for presents."

"Oh," Erik replies, his enthusiasm gone. "Well, maybe next week. How about you Paul? Want to go fishing tomorrow?"

Saturday morning I wake up at seven to say goodbye to my wife, who is going skiing. I look at the clock, smile, and roll over to the warm spot left in the bed. My smile broadens as Wisconsin Public Radio announces: "It's ten below zero with a wind chill of thirty below in northern Wisconsin."■

# Poems by Robert Siegel

## The Moth

She aims for the light within this lamp
Though three successful aspirants lie
Like dirty paper underneath. Still,

One who made it clings
Inside the glass, her bones
Pure fire, eyes gone from too much seeing.

## Bee-Wolf
## (*Anglo-Saxon kenning for 'bear'*)

By July he is legendary—
  rising, a shadow by the woodpile
after the last light,
  to splinter the kitchen door,
gut the honeymooners' cabin,
  and vanish in a cloud of flour.

Two linemen up a pole
  watch while he tears the seat
from their van, swallows both lunches,
  crushing the boxes flat.
At night we lie awake listening
  for his heavy steps by the icehouse.

At noon in the blackberry clearing,
  fingers red with juice,
we feel his eyes focus
  through a green, buzzing slit
and sweat as cobwebs scribble
  his name across our faces.

His cousin in the farmer's zoo
  is an amiable rotundity,
swigging the red syrup-water
  we buy for a quarter, fur
hanging in moth-eaten swatches—
  tipsy, an engaging buffoon.

Yet, unreconstructed, this one
  roams the Chequamegon Forest
and our nightmares all summer.
  In mine, hunched over his spoor,
I look up to find his fangs
  chalk-blue in the moon.

Branches crack as I clamber
  up a smooth trunk, fall with a yell
back to the clutching sheets.
  In one of yours, you tell how
he rises, coated with honey,
  the bees a black storm about him,

a shifting shirt of flame
  he tears at with his paws
as he stumbles toward the lake,
  golden-throated and singing,
blindly and in pain,
  of honey at the heart of the wood.

# *The Downstairs Neighbors*

**By Al Gabor**


They moved in on a February night. That should have tipped me off. Who moves in February? At night? Deadbeats and weirdos, that's who. Any normal couple would have waited until summer and daylight.

It was a Friday, lobster night. My husband Jack moonlights weekends at the Lobster Shack on the south shore—washing dishes, sweeping, all the crap work. He always manages to slip something into a box before he takes out the garbage. Then he picks it up before he leaves. I had the kettle of water ready, the butter in the pan, when Jack comes in carrying a box with the label Moonlight Mushrooms. I can hear the lobsters scratching around inside. "Whose truck?" he asks.

"What truck?" I say.

"The truck in the driveway."

I look outside and there's a U-Haul next to the oak tree.

"Anyone move in downstairs?" Jack asks.

"I didn't hear anything." I didn't either. Another tip-off.

Next day we get up about eleven. The truck is gone, but I hear the shower running downstairs. So we do have new neighbors. And already moved in. I feel a little pissed. I wanted to see their furniture unloaded. You can tell a lot about people from their furniture.

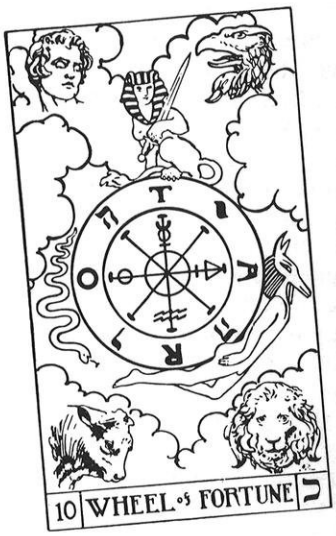
After breakfast I make up a load of wash and take it to the basement. I stop by the neighbors' door on the steps, but I can't make out anything. No voices. Nothing. I see a car around back, a volkswagon with yellow license plates that say, "Wisconsin—America's Dairyland." The car's the color of old iceberg lettuce, rust around a faded green.

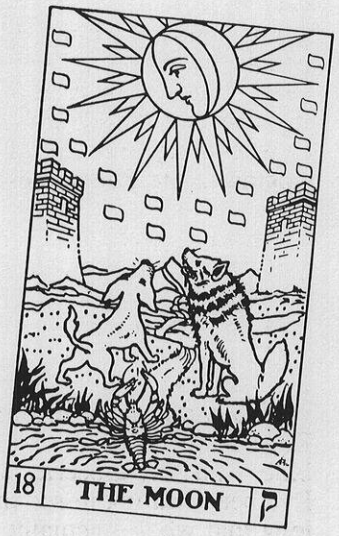
I do two loads of wash, keep walking up and down the steps to check the cycles, but I never hear a sound or catch sight of anyone.

"They're probably sleeping," Jack says. "Where's my workshirt?"

"No oysters or clams," I tell him. "Bring shrimp or some fish, but no oysters or clams." I'd rather have someone spit in my mouth than eat oysters or clams. Actually I wish Jack would get a job in a steak house. Just for a change.

About two hours after Jack goes to work, I hear something downstairs. I turn down the TV and listen for a minute or two. Nothing. Just as I'm about to turn up the sound, I hear this man's voice go, "Oh yeah!" Then I hear grunts. I put my ear to the floor and hear a woman too. First I think they're watching a movie. I listen some more. That's no movie. I turn up the TV as loud as it goes, but check during the first

commercial, just in time to hear the woman scream out something. Then they fall quiet. I go back to my movie, but can't help wondering if Jack will be too tired tonight.

Next day, over coffee and bagels, Jack looks out the window and says, "Patty, if you want a peek at those out-of-state porno stars, here's your chance." He makes everything into a joke. Outside I see a fat woman with red hair and a tall dark-haired man hanging a sleeping bag on the clothes line. I look at the woman's fat ass and wonder what her old man was ohyeahing about.

I decide now's the time, so I grab the garbage pail and go downstairs. They don't see me until I'm just about on top of them. "Hello," I say. "Just moved in, did you?"

They say yeah. The woman seems fatter up close, but she's got nice skin and big green eyes, I'll give her that much. We introduce outselves. They're Nick and Zephyr Carlton. No joke. Zephyr. She tells me that means gentle breeze. I think she needs a new name. Something that means red truck or walking mountain.

That first week they come and go at all hours. After that, Monday through Friday, Nick leaves the house about seven thirty, comes back about five. He wears blue coveralls and carries a toolbox.

We share a mailbox, so I can't help but see their mail. They get letters from people in Wisconsin, all kinds of magazines—a lot of them about food—and some kind of newsletter about ESP with phone numbers in the back to call and find out who you were in a previous life. The address label on the newsletter says Dr. Z Carlton.

I don't know what kind of doctor she is. I never see her go outside. I don't hear the TV or the radio or the vacuum cleaner, so I don't know what she does with herself.

For about a month that's all I know about these people. What I just told you and that they make it every night. Usually around dinnertime. Jack thinks it's hilarious. It adds seasoning to the mashed potatoes or something. Sometimes he gets up and dances while singing to the Flintstones'song.

Carltons! Meet the Carltons!
It's a yubba-dubba-do time,
yabba-do time.
We'll have a gay old time.
Oh yeah!

He makes everything into a joke.

Finally one day I'm coming back from the store and Zephyr invites me inside for some coffee. Out of the blue. I put my groceries away and hurry back down. I've been waiting to see the inside of her place for so long that when I actually get there I'm disappointed. I don't know what I expected, but it was pretty normal except for all the books and the sofa which was some kind of mattress folded up.

**We're friends, but something about her makes me watch what I say, what I do.**

We talk about the weather. We agree we don't like rain. Then Zephyr says, "I think Long Island is going to be a great place for business."

"What business is that?" I ask.

"I'm not sure yet. I've done a lot of things, but it's time for something new."

"What kind of jobs did you have before?"

"Oh, lots of things. I used to paint animals on children's bib overalls. Sold them for big money in the suburb of Chicago where we lived. I wrote a couple of porno novels. A monkey with a typewriter could do that. A monkey with a word processor could get rich at it. Then I had a few straight jobs. Not many, but some."

"Like what?" I ask.

The stuff she tells me! She's worked as a bike messenger and a belly dancer. That must have been a sight. She worked in a chicken hatchery as a chick sexer. She's lectured on parapsychology—I learned that word from her. She studied it out west. That's why her letters are addressed 'Dr.'

Every afternoon I sit around and listen, drink enough coffee to send me into seizures. She's done everything it seems. Not that I take every word as gospel. But she's more interesting than the soaps. We're friends—to a degree. There's always something about her that makes me watch what I say, watch what I do.

We start having dinners together. Sunday night becomes Tijuana night. I make chili; Zephyr makes bean tortillas; Jack makes margaritas; and Nick rolls joints. We light up and then just attack the stuff.

One Sunday Jack is telling his story about a guy he knows who lays his bookcases on their side, with the shelves running up and down, so he can lay his books flat and doesn't have to turn his head to read the titles. Then I notice something I never noticed before. Zephyr doesn't know she's fat. Jack is telling a story and Zephyr is leaning in towards him. Zephyr looks him in the eye, laughs louder than anyone else, flips her hair behind her shoulders—all these little come-on movements.

She's coming on to my husband. This fat woman is too high or too stupid to know she's fat. I start laughing and can't stop. It's good weed and it's so funny. Fatty going after my husband.

Then we're all laughing. We laugh so hard we forget what started us off.

One day I'm ironing and the phone rings. It's Zephyr on the other end. She's too lazy to walk up the steps. She wants me to come downstairs for a minute. I turn off the iron, go down the steps. Her door is open; the shades are all drawn. She's got a candle lit on the coffee table, and she's wearing this dark blue robe and a turban around her head.

"What's wrong?" I say. "Didn't you wash your hair this morning?"

"Sit down, Ms. Caitlin." She's never called me by my last name before. "Sit down and allow the cards to tell you what your future holds."I sit down. She starts flipping cards over. She's made up her eyes so they look even greener and just a little bit spooky. She explains the pictures on the cards, saying stuff like, "Be careful. The man with the stick follows the goat with the rose." I forget it all now, but she's good. If I didn't know her, I'd think she was for real.

When she's done, she tells me that this is her new job. I think she's off her rocker, but she advertises in those magazines and word gets around that Dr. Z is in business. I start seeing strange cars parked in front of the house. Zephyr's living room shades are always drawn; I have to check to see if the porch light is on—her signal—before I call on her.

"Patty," she tells me, "you can't believe the business. Long Island is full of believers."

Suckers, more like. But I keep this to myself.

This goes on. Every day the cars, the people checking the names by the doorbells, the porch light burning. These people catch me hanging out the wash, coming home with the groceries, catch me with my dirty hair stuffed under a scarf, with my nail polish chipped. I just point towards the door and tell them, "Gris-gris lady downstairs."

Zephyr tells me that she charges forty bucks a half-hour session. Tax-free cash. It takes Jack nearly all day at the station to earn that much. And he doesn't make that much during a long night at the restaurant—lobsters or no lobsters. Makes a person wonder.

Last week we had the last Tijuana night. "Give us a show," Jack keeps saying to Zephyr. We've already finished the food and done a few more numbers. "Let me see your routine. I've never seen your routine."

Zephyr pours another margarita from the pitcher, then says okay. We do up another joint while she's changing into her outfit. Nick gets some killer weed. We're all sitting together on the mattress sofa laughing when Zephyr comes out wearing her robe and turban. Jack starts laughing harder, but Dr. Z doesn't crack a smile. She tells him to sit up to the coffee table. She moves the pitcher, wipes down the table, lights the candles, then waits for Jack to calm down. She just watches him. I can see she even put on her weird eyeliner.

Finally Jack gets himself under control, and Zephyr starts her routine. She slaps down her cards. "Something is hidden," she says. "Not a physical thing, but a hidden emotion. Maybe resentment. Maybe love. It will not be a secret for long."

She flips over some more cards, positions them on the table. She only looks at them for a moment. All the rest of the time she just stares into Jack's eyes. "Soon there will be a change in your life. Something that will seem disturbing at first will become a blessing."

I don't like this show. Jack just stares back at Zephyr; she holds his eyes, pitches her voice low. It's all make-believe, I tell myself. I think again about how she acts like she doesn't know she's fat, but it doesn't seem funny to me anymore.

She flips over more cards, but she doesn't even look at them. She never takes her eyes from Jack's. She tells him, "The passions released by this incident will amaze you."

Jack just stares at her. He's hypnotized. Just then my heart starts pounding like crazy. I can hear it in my ears. The candlelight moves over Zephyr's round, smooth face and every word that comes out of that face scares me. I can't even follow what she's saying anymore, but the sound of her voice scares me. She's big, not just fat, but she's bigger than any of us, and that makes me scared.

I look at Jack and Nick and they're just staring at her, and my heart feels like it's going to rip right out of my chest. I try to get up, but fall back on that stupid mattress sofa. I try again and the room moves with me. "I need air, Jack," I say, but he doesn't move. I start shaking him. "Take me outside, Jack. I need air." It takes him forever to turn his head.

I make him walk me around the block twice. Then he takes me upstairs and puts me in bed. "Get in and hold me," I tell him, but he wants to go downstairs to say goodnight to Nick and Zephyr.

I fall asleep alone. I can hear them laughing in my dreams.

The next day Jack's head hurts from all the beer and tequila, and he's late to his real job. But he gets no sympathy from me.

I drink coffee at the kitchen table. Then I get on the phone. I see the cop car about an hour later. They catch her with a customer and wearing her getup. They don't arrest her, but I know they did something because she calls me and she's screaming, "Did you call them? Did you call them?"

I say, "You're the one who's psychic. You tell me."

And that's how it goes. Now we don't talk to either of them and they don't talk to us. Jack doesn't like it, but he'll get over it. I keep hoping the landlord will kick them out, but they're still here.

I keep the broom by the kitchen table. When Nick downstairs starts ohyeahing during our dinner, I use it to pound on the floor. "Shut up down there," I say. "Let us eat in peace. Shut up." ■

Photo by Karen Rudd

## What the Eye Supplies

The duck
Could be drowsing
In the late sun
On the lake,
Resting his head
On his breast,
Lazily looking
For something to eat.

Or is it a duck
Doubled,
Swimming
In twinned symmetry,
Gaze twined
In the creature
At its feet?

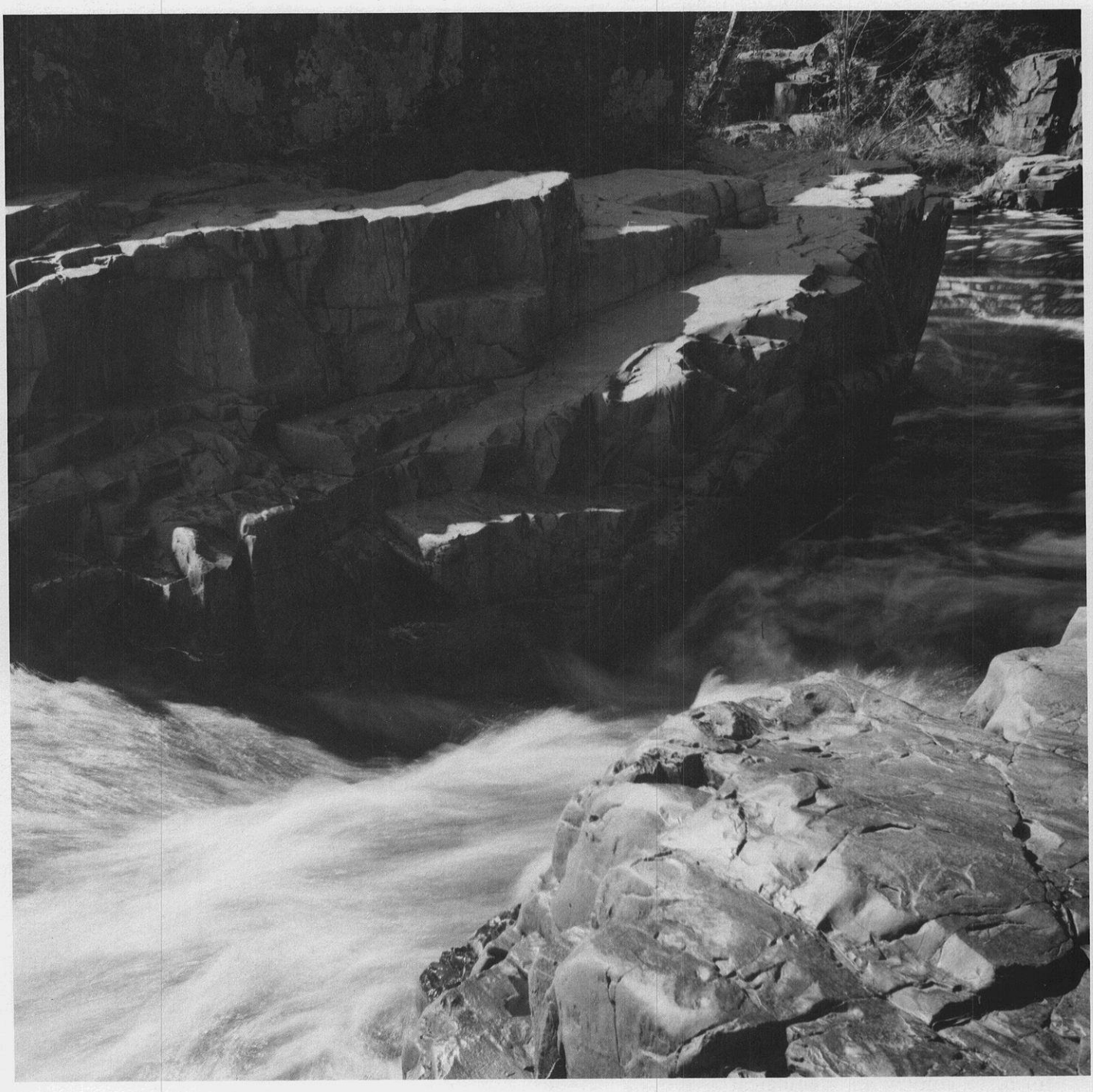
Who are they, stopped
In their dreaming?
The instant leaves
Only a streaming
Parabola of light
The dark double helix,
And the missing point
At which they meet.

*R. S. Chapman*

My photographs are documents of my personal, often whimsical, interaction with the thing photographed. I respond to the beautiful—delicacy of texture, richness of tonality, a gracefulness of composition—though I concede there are other ways of seeing. The subject of these photographs is nature devoid of human contact or in relative harmony with humankind. In these photographs I seek to inform, to convey an ideological viewpoint. Yet the successful photograph is, by itself, sufficient justification for existence.

—Michael Finger

## Wisconsin Photographers' Showcase



**Photographs by Michael Finger**

# BOOK MARKS/WISCONSIN

**THE HISTORY OF WISCONSIN, VOLUME III: URBANIZATION AND INDUSTRIALIZATION, 1873-1893** BY Robert C. Nesbit. Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1985. 693 pp. $30.

**By James J. Lorence**

Students of Wisconsin history have already benefited from Alice E. Smith's and Richard N. Current's contributions to the ambitious history of Wisconsin project undertaken several years ago by the State Historical Society of Wisconsin. With the appearance of Robert C. Nesbit's volume, scholars and general readers may now gain a more sophisticated understanding of the state's development during the important transitional period between the depressions of the 1870s and the 1890s.

Keying on the revolutionary economic changes of the late nineteenth century, Nesbit offers a panoramic view of an economy and society in flux. His coverage is encyclopedic, providing the reader with everything he or she could ever want to know about Wisconsin in those years—and perhaps more. The resulting account is packed with detail and anecdotal material that will enliven many a lecture but which may well test the endurance of the casual reader. Reflecting the author's mastery of the relevant secondary and primary material, this volume answers many questions about the state's rapid growth in a sometimes chaotic period.

Plunging into the potentially lackluster area of economic history, Nesbit approaches agricultural and industrial development with originality. His emphasis on resistance to "book farming" provides a valuable corrective to the assumption of inevitable progress, and he reminds us that contrary to some modern interpretations, Wisconsin husbandmen were not particularly militant politically. While the author's treatment of lumbering is unexceptional, he makes an important contribution to our knowledge of the subject by emphasizing worker problems and early attempts at labor organization in the field. In like manner the development of transportation networks is discussed in excruciating detail. On balance Nesbit's account of economic growth is a familiar story well told.

While the author sometimes relies excessively on statistics to make his point, he does provide a vivid portrait of the nineteenth-century workplace. Consistent with rural suspicions of scientific agriculture was a stubborn reluctance to embrace industrialization in some quarters. Paradoxically, Nesbit finds relatively little labor unrest in the early stages of industrial development. By the 1880s, however, a sharper sense of grievance was evident as workers flocked to industrial unions and the eight-hour movement. Arguing that industrial unionism was often politically ineffective, Nesbit gives ample coverage to the eight-hour demonstrations which parallelled the more widely known Haymarket disturbance in Chicago and ended in the tragic Bay View incident of 1886. He correctly notes the damaging social results of the clash, which exacerbated ethnic tensions and encouraged anti-labor attitudes among middle-class observers.

In some ways the reality of Bay View raises a serious question about a countervailing theme which penetrates Nesbit's interpretation of late nineteenth century Wisconsin society. Although the author recognizes the presence of ethnocultural conflict in an ethnically diverse state, assimilation emerges as a significant theme in his work. Occasionally, as in an extended treatment of town government and its Americanizing effect, the point seems overdrawn. Similarly, Nesbit's emphasis on harmonious community relations and immigrant deference may understate the tensions which seethed beneath the surface, especially in the rural, village, and town environments. In this connection, his acknowledgment of differences between contentious immigrant groups is helpful.

It is when Nesbit links ethnic differences to political life that he is most successful. Indeed, the author is at his best in the concluding sec-

tion of the book, which deals with the sometimes murky politics of the Badger state. As he leads the reader through the labyrinth of party politics, Nesbit displays the wit for which he is justifiably well known. Nothing could be more entertaining that a healthy dose of political realism dispensed by the likes of Philetus Sawyer!

And for nineteenth-century politicians, nothing could have been more chastening than the message delivered by immigrant voters to the unrepentant Republicans during the Bennett Law controversy. The Republican fate in the early 1890s stands as convincing evidence of the political power of ethnicity in nineteenth-century Wisconsin. Nesbit's extended discussion of the battle confirms the divisive potential of ethnic issues and reveals his own understanding of latent social dislocation. No section of the book is stronger than this one, which documents ethnic politics in action.

Surveying changes in governmental institutions, Nesbit concludes that the period was one of legislative supremacy, occasionally punctuated by executive innovation. He argues that Wisconsin government underwent a significant centralization, accompanied by the expansion of institutional programs and the development of state regulatory boards. Concluding that partisanship was not deeply divisive (a debatable argument), he demonstrates that the tradition of good government and service to the state did not originate with the Progressives. Rather, Progressive reform in Wisconsin may be traced to a period whose politics were once thought sterile. In Nesbit's view the new politics were in fact directly related to wrenching social and economic changes that preceded the reform era.

In the last analysis the contradictions which emerge in this account of a turbulent period reflect the complexities of the era. If immigrants accommodated themselves to their new environment, they also struck out when threatened; if farmers and workers resisted change, a new economy emerged by the end of the century and they responded to its demands; and if politics were cynical or pragmatic, their product was the strong guarantor state of the next generation. Nesbit has deepened our grasp of these confusing realities. The result is a volume which will become the standard introduction to the history of Wisconsin in the age of transition.

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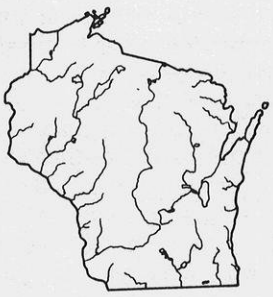
*James J. Lorence, professor of history at UW Center-Marathon County, is a specialist in twentieth-century American history. His recent publications deal with socialism in northern Wisconsin during World War I.*



**GREENHOUSE: IT WILL HAPPEN IN 1997** by Dakota James. New York: Donald I. Fine, 1984. 221 pp. $15.50.

**MILWAUKEE THE BEAUTIFUL** by Dakota James. New York: Donald I. Fine, 1986. 271 pp. $16.95.

**By Brooke Anson**

As I write this review, newspapers are reporting the testimony of NASA scientists to Congress that global warming is now inevitable, not just a hypothesis, that an ozone loss of 30 to 50 percent has been measured over the South Pole during a recent five-year period, and that floods, drought, and more skin cancer will occur by the middle of the twenty-first century. Within just twenty years, they predict, the global temperature will be two degrees higher, which is warmer than the earth has been in 100,000 years.

Dakota James has anticipated that condition in Greenhouse. He writes of the sweltering days of February, 1997, after the world's atmosphere has passed the "tip-over point." Bangladesh and other low-lying countries are under water, victims of polar ice melt and rising seas, while the mammoth reservoir of fossil water under the plains of the United States has been exhausted by irrigation and drought. The animal population is in disarray, migratory birds are extinct, and the Alaskan and Canadian caribou have all but died out.

The human population continues to adjust to change in its own inimitable manner. Electric power is sporadic; air conditioners have been banned—even in all the buildings with fixed windows from the 1960s—and theatergoers swelter in their underwear, the high-fashion "Kokwalski look." Jet setters vacation in Alaska. The United Nations bickers its way around solutions, with the Third World nations generally in opposition; United States politicians are negotiating against environmentalists and squatters to establish a high technology Antarctic heat pump to exhaust atmospheric heat through a hole in the Van Allen radiation belt. Following a supply-side economic philosophy, U. S. industry produces incessantly, further polluting the atmosphere; the continent's mineral resources have been all but exhausted. The Secretary of the Interior, a disciple of James Watt, has established "moonscape wonder parks" among the tailings and wastelands of the ravaged Yosemite, Tetons, and Glacier parks for the unending delight of working-class tourists and off-road vehicle operators.

Casper Spent, nominally assistant professor of philosophy at Freedom State University in Chicago but also poet, inventor, seldom an actor but often acted upon, and a writer of interminable memos of frustration to Dean Thomas Puffit,

is a foil for the world of 1997 and provides a medium for the novel's secondary theme, the state of education. Freedom State University was founded in the late 1980s and grounded in four thirty-story cement towers in Chicago's Loop. In contrast to the University of Chicago, which produces "thinkers," F.S.U. produces "leaders" who go out and do things. It is funded almost entirely by grants, the acquisition of which is the primary responsibility of Dean Puffit; most students come with scholarships for which they apply by reciting from memory either lyrics from a best-selling puke rock composition or the compression ratios of two post-1988 Japanese motorcycle engines. Teaching methods are based almost entirely on audio-visual "educational delivery systems"; Casper's particular value to the faculty, and the reason for his continued retention, is that he is willing to spend most of his days wheeling the equipment from one building to another and setting it up for senior faculty. Though untenured, he is opposed to most of the principles of F.S.U.; he openly despises the discussion method of education and has been accused of elitism because he occasionally tells incompetent students that they are. He might be compared to a tenured predecessor who was forced to resign after arranging chairs in his classroom in a row rather than the circular mode and insisting that students sit in them rather than on the floor, and who also actually failed several students over several semesters.

The story is the least part of the book; there is little plot development and almost no character development or growth. After a short, ineffective life, Spent attacks a bulldozer and is shot, perhaps sensing along with an older acquaintance that "instead of being able to join a pool of tranquil wisdom from which bewildered youth could draw courage and inspiration, as they had been promised by gerontology, they were little more than a drug on the market." Along the way, however, James has a delightful time postulating the course of our environmental and educational follies; his satire, while not so refined as Swift's, is equally biting and often hilarious.

*Milwaukee the Beautiful* is set in 2013 and is, for the most part, an extension of the world of *Greenhouse* without being a sequel. Where technology and education are the primary targets of the earlier work, James here takes particular aim at art, culture, and politics.

There are now some sixty-one United States, including Milwaukee, Buffalo, Duluth, St. Petersburg plus the Idaho and Alaska panhandles, each having seceded for its own unique reasons. The inexorable northward migration of people seeking escape from the heat of southern areas continues. Milwaukee's distinction is that it sits under a stalled meteorological phenomenon that gives it the climate of "old" San Diego; it is now called the "city of palms." To protect it from a undesirable influx of "southerners," it has been made into a walled city-state, patrolled by guards who only admit bearers of passes signed by the governor. It is essentially a state based on stasis—the antithesis of everything embodied by Freedom State University—whose flag features the motto, AT THE CENTER OF WISDOM IS PERMANENCE and whose social philosophy is based in a book titled *Small is Beautiful.* Government is headed by a benevolent dictator; the most popular car is the Shikel, finished with sixteen coats of enamel and designed to run forever. Weak and low-calorie beers have been banned as have been "diet books and other pornography." The only cloud in its environment seems to be the growth of a number of cults responding to the enigmatic message, "Begin again," issued by a computer normally used to translate data from a radio telescope.

Characters appear and disappear; portions of their lives cross but are not really interwoven. Diego Rivera Garcia Lorca Grenada, known as Pooch, is a mild, middle-aged writer, schooled in England, who has been imprisoned in Mexico for eight years for his "leftist propaganda." He meets Charles Far, or Rico, an eighteen-year old with artistic yearning, and together they breach the Rio Grande wall. Once in the United States and after spending several weeks in the Carlsbad Caverns detention center for illegals, from which they escape through a bureaucratic fluke, they work their way to Milwaukee. In lieu of a governor's pass, a pair of dirty books gets them by the border guards.

Pooch meets and settles down with the daughter of an ultra-conservative radical who hoards gold in expectation of a breakdown of the Milwaukee milieu in the face of outside forces. Rico entertains a fling with the daughter of the Shikel auto factory owner ("she wants to make me into a pet"), expresses his artistic talent in a series of paintings of carrots and by entering a contest for a new state flag (and is beaten by a contestant who enters the old state flag overprinted with the motto THERE ARE LIMITS.) He moves to Paris and, after a brief sting following the footsteps of Delacroix, returns to Mexico to rescue his mother. By that time, however, the Rio Grande wall has been secured with laser beams and he is trapped. The "Begin again" message is ultimately revealed to be the product of a computer programmer's experiment with artificial intelligence.

Dakota James is a professor of anthropology at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and his sense of the possible behaviors of people in given circumstances is keen, as is his sense of irony. His novels, though often funny and occasionally poignant, never become more than frameworks upon which he hangs his own somewhat disjointed observations and opinions of society, generously flavored by his residence in Wisconsin and his acquaintance with education as practiced at UW-Milwaukee.

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*Brooke Anson is a librarian at the University of Wisconsin-Stout.*

**THE PARKSIDE STORIES** by Herbert Kubly & Students. Madison: Northword, 1985. 151 pp. $8.95.

**By James A. Gollata**

The debate over whether creative writing can be taught with success on any level is at least as old as the University of Iowa's prestigious Writers' Workshop, which this year is celebrating its fiftieth anniversary. Sinclair Lewis is reputed to have admonished a gathering of would-be authors to return to their homes and work if they were serious about writing, and the recently deceased novelist Bernard Malamud thought that there might be some value in taking *one* course in creative writing.

New Glarus native Herbert Kubly, author of several books, plays, short stories, and articles, conducted a writing workshop at the University of Wisconsin-Parkside from 1969 to 1984. During this time he attempted to nurture in "more than a thousand students" the realization of what it means to write: developing the creative ego through the awareness and translation of past experience, accepting one's own emotional sensitivity, and overcoming the fear of personal exposure. As he explained in "Home is the Writer" (*Wisconsin Academy Review*, June 1984), "literary intuition" is not taught but assisted through group process. This book is a collection of eleven stories and two fables selected from a few saved each year of Kubly's tenure at the workshop.

Kubly's technique is described in a preface by Carla Sheehan-Johnson. Students chose their own subjects about which to write, to be based on personal experience no matter what the locale. First drafts were presented in class and submitted to the question "Is this a story?" This collective scrutiny fostered competition and discipline and usually much revision, while Kubly nondidactically provided "encouragement, criticism, support, [and] friendship." The results, in both extent of talent and accomplishment are diverse.

Perhaps because they were written over fifteen years time and due also to Kubly's approach to creative writing instruction, not all of the stories are told in the present tense, as is the fashion in much contemporary fiction. Also missing is the open-endedness prevalent in the products of creative writing workshops today, in which the reader is expected to project the continuance of the story after its finish and, often, to assume much of the action before the first sentence as well. These pieces have clear beginnings, middles, and ends. They also address a variety of subjects, with distinguishable voices.

Carla Sheehan-Johnson has apparently never been taught, by Kubly or anyone else, the "rule" in writing which states that, because of the mechanics of reading, it is best not to give a character a name which ends in 's.' To complicate matters further, she has elected to use and follow just such a name with a word beginning with 's' in "Nikos' Son," clearly one of the best stories in the anthology. Just as there seems to be in every creative writing class a poem containing the words "life is . . . " there is a story dealing with the death of a child. Sheehan-Johnson has written the representative piece here, with pathos and sensitivity regarding both the clash of cultures and male/female relationships.

"Rules of the Game," by Sharon Grueter, also is concerned with relationships between genders. A girl's panicky attempt to break up with her boyfriend while in the front seat of his car begins with rollicking good fun for the reader and ends in a sensitive scene of adolescence brought on by a desperate threat of suicide.

Suicide was rarely funnier than in John Brien's "Beyond the Green Door." In a cynically breezy manner, Brien's college student protagonist easily coaxes his roommate from a dormitory ledge and back into the neurotic world of the undergraduate. Even the police are humorous.

Tall tales are in evidence. Alex Marlis, Kubly's adopted son from Greece, offers "I Never Saw a Ghost," which proves to be true, but only after much terror for the narrator and his donkey in a forest of the author's homeland. Mark Schall's "Amazing Grace" concerns a confrontation between a southern rustic and the devil, told in authentic voice by a little boy's grandfather. Schall states in a brief sketch that while in grade school he was "sometimes the greatest liar in the class."

Another kind of horror is evident in "Terror at the Center Line," by Marguerite McClelland. In this case turning forty is the devil to be feared, and hallucinatory visions in traffic must be overcome before the "celebrant" can resign herself to the fate of her age.

Fate plays a part in the horror/adventure story, "The Rape of Cassandra," by Don Robers. This is a narrative of shipwreck and subsequent diving for treasure, complete with widow's curse and the skeleton of Captain McQuade, her husband. The two short "fables" by Rich Luehr could easily have served as the bases for humorous but predictable vignettes on Rod Serling's television program, "Night Gallery." "First Encounter" relates the fate of the human being designated to make physical contact with an extraterrestrial called a Halkatoid, and "The Night Walker" is a seemingly vampirish character who is doomed to return night after night to his shrewish wife.

Considerably more earthly adventure occurs in Lauren Johnson's "Picador," a Spanish bullfighting story of bravado in the ring and contention and betrayal between participants while out of the arena. The tone and haunting finale of this piece assure its place as one of the best written in the book.

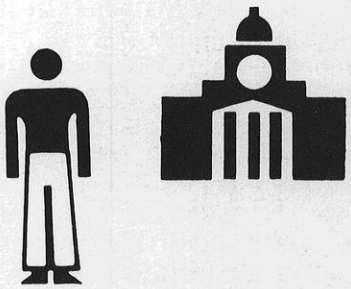
Personal trials manifest themselves in different ways in the collection. In "The Race," by Mark Manning, a runner is tested both temporally and spiritually as he struggles to prove himself. "A New Day" is a "bad boy" story, in which Robert M. Stevenson narrates the overnight adventures of an aimless young man engaged in beer drinking and sex while haunted by religious specters.

Father/son relationships are strongly drawn in two stories. "Screens," by Bruce Johnson, interposes an eleven-year-old boy's troubled thoughts with the pronouncements of his father while the two are engaged in a household chore, with tender effect. And Kubly's own offering, "The Night Visitors," decisively depicts the generation gap in the relationship between a divorced father and his grown sons while on a holiday in Zurich.

With such varied authorship and storylines and with the amount of writing and rewriting which must have been done, it is unfortunate that these stories are not better than they are. Very few are untroubled by problems of grammar, word choice, unevenness, or the overuse of adjectives. Although most are of some interest, very few are memorable or without need of polish.

Kubly states in his introduction that this book "fills me with more pride than has any single one of my own." As the culmination of his years in the workshop this is understandable, but the effort could have been a more significant testimonial.

*James A. Gollata, director of library services at Mount Senario College in Ladysmith, is a published poet and short story writer.*



**BLACK LABOR AND THE AMERICAN LEGAL SYSTEM** by Herbert Hill. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1985. 455 pp. cloth $27.50; paper $12.50.

**By Albert Fried**

Those who have even a passing familiarity with the history of civil rights and labor and jusrisprudence in America are in Herbert Hill's debt for bringing us this invaluable study. Its importance lies not only in the range and depth of its explorations and its exhaustive scholarship; it also lies in the vast possibilities it opens up for further inquiry into the subjects it treats. *Black Labor and the American Legal System* provides information to be found nowhere else, or nowhere that is accessible to us, since Hill apparently went through every law journal, every court case, every government document from every government agency, and of course every secondary source dealing with civil rights. Thanks to his heroic efforts we see things we had not seen clearly before, or not seen it all.

On the whole the book makes melancholy reading. It is a thick chronicle of injustice, redeemed occasionally by exceptional men and deeds. It explains the promise of black freedom which emerged from the Civil War and which the Fourteenth Amendment and the civil rights acts of the 1860s and '70s—and how that promise was taken away step by step over the next seventy-five years or so. We learn in appalling detail how the legal system conspired with society at large, the white working class in particular, to reduce blacks to economic as well as political servitude. The unions, notably the American Federation of Labor (as the first successful union and the model for unionism as such), elbowed blacks out of skilled trades which had been theirs since slave days and maintained separate and decidedly unequal black locals. We learn too in disturbing detail how the mass of European immigrants, themselves desperate and impoverished, were incorporated into the structure of racial discrimination. It was the specific fate of black workers always to be relegated to the bottom of the heap.

No section of the book is more melancholy, to this reader at least, than that dealing with the New Deal and its aftermath, that is, with the National Labor Relations Act and the spectacular rise of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO). Hill compels us to reexamine assumptions that had hardened into dogmas. He is a deft practitioner of the art of demystification. Organized labor correctly regarded the Wagner Act (which set up the NLRB) as its Magna Carta. Within ten years after its passage union ranks swelled from about 12 percent of the working population to about 35 percent (the war having helped, of course). During this time the ancient dream of American radicals, the organization of the mass production industries, was triumphantly realized, and the instrument of the phenomenal success, the CIO, did keep faith in large measure with the radical dream, since communists and socialists played a prominent role in its creation. The New Deal accomplishments, in short were enormous, and history has duly sanctified them. But overlooked in the rush of congratulation have been, as usual, the black workers. Hill forces us to look squarely at this unpleasant truth. In doing so he makes us aware of a gigantically cruel irony—that the rights guaranteed by the NLRB actually worsened the condition of blacks. Its rulings over the years le-

gally ratified discrimination and exclusion in hitherto unorganized industries where, to a minimal degree at least, blacks once had been able to compete and earn a living. Hill goes on to demonstrate how, down to the present, the NLRB has refused to penalize unions for their racist malpractices, even though those unions would hardly exist without government protection. In that sense government has collaborated in racism.

But neither is the book without hope. It sedulously records the astonishing changes for the better that have occurred in the wake of the great civil rights protests. It takes up, at compendious length, the achievements brought about by the 1964 Civil Rights Act (Title VII) and a host of federal court decisions. Hill masterfully show us the social and legal forces that have been set in motion seeking to redress past wrongs and guarantee equality in the workplace—equality for other minorities and women as well as blacks, beneficiaries all of the same struggle.

*Black Labor and the American Legal System* was first published nine years ago (and The University of Wisconsin Press deserves our gratitude for making it available as a paperback), when the momentum for salutary change had not yet run its course. Has it run its course since then? Have the gains of the 1960s been lost? If so, with what effects? What is the prognosis, given the increasingly reactionary complexion of the courts? Such questions are provoked by the desire for truth which Hill has whetted in us so skillfully. How unfortunate, therefore, that he did not include an afterword, an addendum, that would have kept us abreast of developments, tendencies, changes in the last decade. This caveat, however, only brings out in bolder relief the magnitude of his tour de force.

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*Albert Fried, professor of history at the State University of New York at Purchase, has written extensively on American social and political history.*

## New Books To Note

Milton J. Bates, *Wallace Stevens: A Mythology of Self.* Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1985. 319 pp. $24.95. (literary criticism / biography)

Mark Dintenfass, *A Loving Place.* New York: William Morrow, 1986. 287 pp. $17.95. (novel)

Thomas H. Garver, *George Tooker.* New York: Clarkson N. Potter, 1985. 50 color plates. 145 pp. $35.00. (art criticism / biography)

James Hazard, *New Year's Eve in Whiting, Indiana.* Milwaukee: Main Street Publishing, 1985. 64 pp. $6.50. (poetry)

Witt Lowidski, *Active Death: Unholy Rhymes.* New York: Dracula Unlimited, 1986. 44 pp. (poetry)

Jacquelyn Mitchard, *Mother Less Child: The Love Story of a Family.* New York: Norton, 1985. 379 pp. $15.95. (biography)

Susan Peterson, *Preparing the Fields.* Peoria, IL: Spoon River Poetry Press, 1985. 33 pp. $4.00. (poetry)

*Salthouse 14 15 16 17.* Milwaukee: Salthouse, 1985. 91 pp. $6.00/ 4 issues. (literary magazine)

Ralph E. Schroeder, *A Glory From the Earth.* Hancock, WI: Pearl-Win, 1986. 223 pp. $9.95. (novel)

Gwen Schultz, *Wisconsin's Foundations.* Dubuque, IA: Kendall-Hunt, 1986. 211 pp. $19.95. (geology)

Ingolf Vogeler et al, *Wisconsin: A Geography.* Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1986. 224 pp. $42.50 hard cover; $22.50 soft cover. (geography)

**Book reviewers needed.** We are updating our files of book reviewers. Persons interested in contributing book reviews should send name, address, professional qualifications and experience, with subjects you are interested in reviewing to Editor, *Wisconsin Academy Review*, 1922 University Avenue, Madison, WI 53705. Payment is book to be reviewed and two copies of the journal in which the review appears.

Because we believe the book reviews are an important source of information about the intellectual and cultural life in Wisconsin, we try to find a reviewer who is able to assess accurately each book reviewed. We give serious consideration to reviewers and are most grateful for the valuable service they perform for the Academy and for our readers.

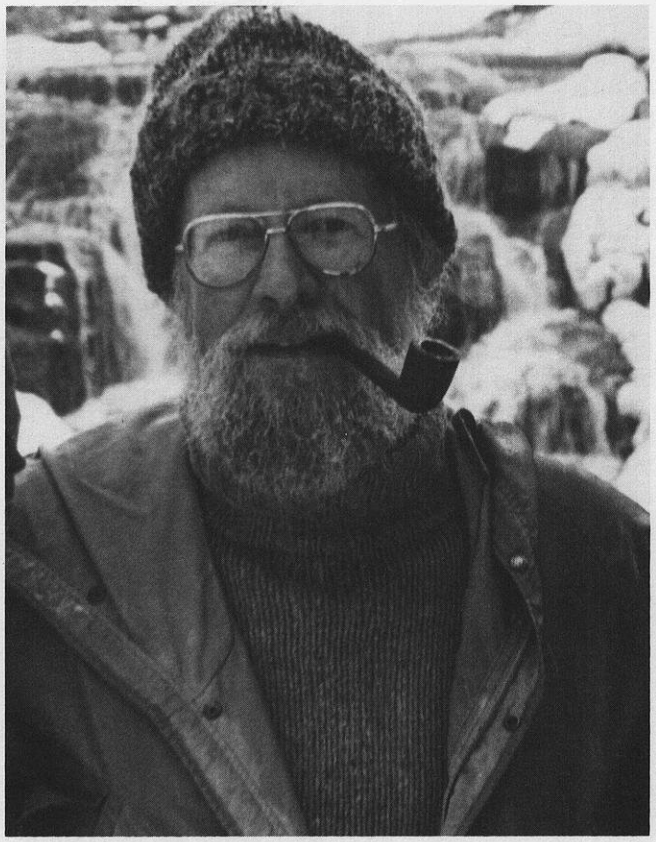
## Coming up in the Wisconsin Academy Review

December 1986: eighteen experts from university, government, industry, private organizations, and farms explore technology and its impact on the economics of family farming in Wisconsin.

March 1987: Wisconsin archaeologists and anthropologists penetrate the far corners of the earth and close to home to uncover the secrets of the past—Old and New World archaeology as seen through the Wisconsin lens.

September 1987: political scientists, historians, lawyers, judges, politicians celebrate the bicentennial of the U.S. Constitution and trace significant trends in interpretations.

If you wish to contribute to these 1987 issues, please outline your proposed topic and your expertise and publications in this field and send to Patricia Powell, Editor, Wisconsin Academy Review, 1922 University Avenue, Madison 53705.



# Nancy and Robert Burkert

Cover artist Nancy Ekholm Burkert is perhaps best known for her illustrations of children's books, such as Roald Dahl's *James and the Giant Peach* (1961), Hans Christian Andersen's tale, *The Nightingale* (1965), and Randall Jarrell's translation of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1972). She has also illustrated a limited edition of Emily Dickinson's poems, *Acts of Light*, published by the New York Graphic Society in 1980.

Nancy Ekholm was born in Sterling, Colorado, in 1933, and moved to Wisconsin when she was eleven. She took her bachelor's and master's degrees in applied art at UW-Madison and married painter and printmaker Robert Burkert. Their two children were frequent subjects of her paintings and even bronzes.

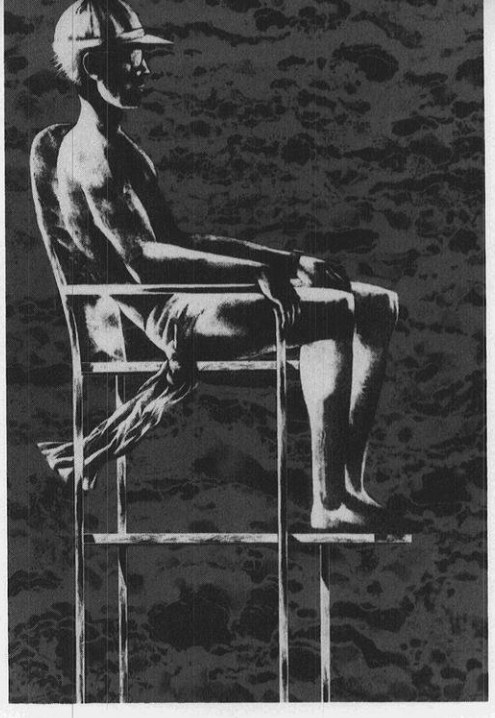
In addition to her book illustrations she has exhibited her drawings and paintings at solo shows at the John Michael Kohler Art Center in Sheboygan, the Bergstrom Mahler Museum in Neenah, the Elvehjem Museum of Art in Madison, the American Swedish Institution in Minneapolis, the Paine Art Museum in Oshkosh, and the Milwaukee Art Museum, which exhibit coincided with the publication of *The Art of Nancy Burkert* by Peacock/Bantam in 1977.

Nancy Burkert was elected Fellow of the Academy this year. In October she and husband Robert will have a joint show of paintings, prints, and drawings for the gala reopening of the Wisconsin Academy Gallery. A poster designed by Nancy and a limited edition print by Robert will be available from the Academy by October 1.

Robert Burkert was born in Racine in 1930. He studied printmaking and painting at UW-Madison with Dean Meeker, Alfred Sessler, Santos Zingale, and John Wilde. He received his B.S. in 1952 and M.S. in 1955. Since 1956 he had been a member of the UW-Milwaukee Art Department. Robert researched lithography at Curwen Press in London in 1968 and serigraphy at the Desjobert workshop in Paris in 1970. His work is owned by the Tate Gallery in London, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, the Bergstrom Mahler Museum in Neenah, the Madison Art Center, Milwaukee Art Museum, Rahr-West Museum in Manitowoc, and the Wustum Museum of Fine Arts in Racine. A major retrospective of his work was mounted at the Wustum in 1985, "Robert Burkert: 30 Years," a survey of paintings and works on paper from 1955 to 1985.

The Burkerts live in Milwaukee in winter and on Cape Cod in summer.

Nancy Burkert, "Centre & Circumference"
Original image in brush and watercolor, ©1980
Poster is high-quality color reproduction designed in 1986 for Wisconsin Academy



Robert Burkert, "Lifeguard"
Two-color lithograph, umber black and cobalt
15″ × 22 1/2″, 1986
Edition of 100, 50 now available

**Wisconsin Academy Gallery**

The Wisconsin Academy Gallery is a noncommercial exhibition space accessible to Wisconsin artists in all media. The gallery, remodeled in summer 1986 to provide a more diverse space, is managed by a committee of artists. Past gallery fund-raising events have included prints by John Wilde and original works by such Wisconsin masters as Aaron Bohrod, Warrington Colescott, John Colt, Dean Meeker, Don Reitz, James Watrous, and Lee Weiss.

In return for a specified contribution to the gallery patrons may select a poster or a limited edition lithograph. Funds donated help support Wisconsin Academy art programs and publications to advance the interests and understanding of art in Wisconsin.

**Contribution—Gift Selection**

_____ $40 contribution is eligible for UNSIGNED COLOR POSTER of Nancy Burkert's "Centre and Circumference"

_____ $75 contribution is eligible for Nancy Burkert's SIGNED COLOR POSTER

_____ $200 contribution is eligible for LIMITED EDITION LITHOGRAPH of "Lifeguard" by Robert Burkert

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